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THE HUGUENOT.

VOL. III.

LONDON :
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

THE
HUGUENOT:
A TALE
OF
THE FRENCH PROTESTANTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE GIPSY," "THE ROBBER,"
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
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THE HUGUENOT.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNFORESEEN BLOW.

To have judged by the affable and agreeable smile which Louvois bore upon his countenance as he passed the young Count de Morseuil in one of the anterooms, a stranger to that minister would have imagined that he was extremely well disposed towards the gentleman whom he was in fact labouring to ruin. No such error, however, could have taken place with regard to the aspect with which the King received the young Count, which, though not frowning and severe, was grave and somewhat stern.

The countenance and conduct of Albert of Morseuil was calm, tranquil, and serene; and Louis, who, intending to cut the interview as

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short as possible, had risen, could not help saying within himself, "That looks not like the face of a man conscious of crime."

As the King paused while he made this remark to himself, the Count imagined that he waited for him to begin and open the cause of his coming ; and, consequently, he said at once, "Sire, I have ventured to intrude upon your Majesty, notwithstanding your intimation that you would send for me when your convenience served, inasmuch as I have matters of some importance to lay before you, which would bear no delay."

"Pray," demanded Louis, "pray, Monsieur de Morseiul, before you proceed further, be so good as to inform me, whether the matters to which you allude refer to yourself or to the state?"

"By no means to myself," replied the Count, who was not altogether satisfied with the King's tone and manner. "They refer entirely to the safety of the state and your Majesty. On my own affairs I would not have presumed to intrude upon you again."

"Very well, then," said the King dryly, "since such is the case, you will be good enough to communicate whatever you may have to say

upon such subjects to Monsieur de Louvois, Monsieur de Seignelai, or Monsieur Colbert de Croissy, as the case may be; such being the usual course by which matters of importance are brought to my ears. And now, Monsieur de Morseiul, though I have but a single moment to attend to any thing at this particular time, let me ask you one question, — Is there or is there not any hope of my receiving the great gratification of being enabled to show you as much favour and distinction as I could wish, by your abjuring the heresy in which you have been unfortunately brought up, and seeking repose in the bosom of the Catholic church?"

The Count de Morseiul felt that a crisis in his fate had arrived; but, with the question put to him so simply and straight-forwardly, he felt that he could not evade the decision, and he would not prevaricate even for safety.

"If, Sire," he said, "what your Majesty demands is to know my own opinion upon the subject at this moment—"

"I mean, Sir," said the King, "plainly, Do you believe that there exists a likelihood of your becoming converted to the Catholic faith?"

"I do not believe so, Sire," replied the Count. "With deep and profound respect for

your Majesty, with much veneration and regard for Monsieur Bossuet, and with all the advantage of being even now reading some of his works upon religion, I should be deceiving your Majesty, I should be wronging myself, I should be showing myself unworthy of the high opinion which Monsieur de Meaux has expressed of me, if I did not clearly and distinctly state that I see no likelihood whatsoever of my changing opinions instilled into me in infancy."

"Nay, nay," cried the King, considerably moved and struck by the calm, yet respectful dignity of the young Count's demeanour. "Think better of it! In God's name think better of it! Let me hope that the eloquence of Bossuet will prevail — let me hope that I may yet have the opportunity of conferring upon you all those favours that I am most eager to bestow."

There was an eagerness and sincerity in the King's manner, which affected the Count in turn. "Alas, Sire," he said, "what would I not do to merit the favour of such a King? but still I must not deceive you. Whatever hopes your Majesty is pleased to entertain of my conversion to the established religion of the realm, may be derived from the knowledge—from the

powerful gratitude—which your Majesty’s generosity and high qualities of every kind must call up in your subjects and your servants; or they may arise from your knowledge of the deep and persuasive eloquence of the Bishop of Meaux: but they must not arise from any thing that I have said, or can say, regarding the state of my mind at this moment.”

“ I grieve, Monsieur de Morseiul, I grieve bitterly to hear it,” replied the King; and he then paused, looking down thoughtfully for some moments; after which he added, “ Let me remonstrate with you, that nothing may be left undone, which I can do, to justify me in treating you as I could wish. Surely, Monsieur de Morseiul, there can be nothing very difficult to believe in that which so many—nay, I may say all the holiest, the wisest, and the best have believed, since the first preaching of our religion. Surely, the great body of authority which has accumulated throughout ages, in favour of the Catholic church, is not to be shaken by such men as Luther and Calvin. You yourselves acknowledge that there are—as there must ever be when heavenly things are revealed to earthly understanding—mysteries which we cannot subject to the ordinary test of human knowledge, in

the whole scheme of our redemption — you acknowledge it; and yet with faith you believe in those mysteries, rejecting only those which do not suit you, and pretending that the Scripture does not warrant them. But let me ask you, upon what authority we are to rely for the right interpretation of those very passages? Is it to be upon the word of two such men as Luther and Calvin, learned though they might be, or on the authority of the church, throughout all ages, supported by the unbiassed opinions of a whole host of the learned and the wise in every century? Are we to rely upon the opinion of two men, originally stirred up by avarice and bad passions, in preference to the whole body of saints and martyrs, who have lived long lives of piety and holiness, meditating upon those very mysteries which you reject. I am but a weak and feeble advocate, Monsieur de Morseiul, and should not, perhaps, have raised my voice at all after the eloquence of a Bossuet has failed to produce its effect; but my zealous and anxious wish both to see you reunited to the church, and to show you that favour which such a conversion would justify, have made me say thus much."

The young Count was too prudent by far to

enter into any theological discussions with the King, and he, therefore, contented himself with replying, "I fear, Sire, that our belief is not in our own power. Most sincerely do I hope and trust, that, if I be now in the wrong, God may open my eyes to the truth. At present however ——"

"Say no more, Sir! say no more!" said the King, bending his head as a signal that the young nobleman might retire. "I am heartily sorry for your state of mind! I had hoped better things. As to any other information you may have to communicate, you will be pleased to give it to one of the secretaries of state, according to the department to which it naturally refers itself."

The King once more bowed his head, and the Count with a low inclination retired. "I had better go at once to the apartments of Louvois," he thought; "for this affair of Hatréaumont may be already on the eve of bursting forth, and I would fain have the last act of my stay in my native land one of loyalty to the King who drives me forth."

When he reached the open air, then, he turned to the right, to seek the apartments of Louvois; but, ere he reached them, he was met by the

Chevalier de Rohan, whom we have already mentioned, who stopped him with a gay and nonchalant air, saying, "Oh, my dear Count," you have made my fortune! The hundred louis that you lent me have brought good luck, and I am now a richer man than I have been for the last twelve months. I won ten thousand franks yesterday."

"And, doubtless, will lose them again to-day," answered the Count. "I wish to Heaven you would change this life — but, my dear Chevalier, I must hasten on, for I am on business."

"When shall I have an hour to talk with you, Count?" exclaimed the Chevalier de Rohan, still detaining him. "I want very much to explain to you my plan for raising myself — I am down low enough, certainly, just now."

"When next we meet, Chevalier — when next we meet!" said the Count, smiling as he thought of his approaching departure. "I am in great haste now."

But ere he could disengage himself from the hold of the persevering Chevalier de Rohan, he felt a hand laid gently upon his arm, and turning round, saw a gentleman whose face was not familiar to him.

"Monsieur le Comte de Morseiul, I believe,"

said the stranger ; and, on the Count bowing his head, he went on. “ I have to apologise for interrupting your conversation ; but I have a word for your private ear of some importance.”

The Chevalier de Rohan had by this time turned away, with a nod of the head ; and the Count replied to the other, “ I am in some haste, Sir. Pray, what may be your pleasure ? ”

“ I have an unpleasant task to perform towards you, Monsieur de Morseiul,” said the stranger ; “ but it is my wish to execute it as gently and delicately as possible. My orders are to arrest and convey you to the Bastille.

The Count de Morseiul felt that painful tightening of the heart which every man, thus suddenly stopped in the full career of liberty, and destined to be conveyed to long and uncertain imprisonment, to be shut out from all the happy sounds and sights of earth, to be debarred all the sweet intercourses of friendship and affection, has felt and must feel. At the same time all the various points of anxiety and difficulty in his situation rushed through his mind with such rapidity as to turn him dizzy with the whirling numbers of such painful thoughts. Clémence de Marly, whose hand

was to have been his that very night, the good old pastor, his friends, his servants, all might, for aught he knew, be kept in utter ignorance of his fate for many days. The hands, too, of the unscrupulous and feelingless instruments of despotic power, would be in every cabinet of his house and his château, invading all the little storehouses of past affections, perhaps scattering to the winds all the fond memorials of the loved and dead. The dark lock of his mother's hair, which he had preserved from boyhood — the few fragments of her handwriting, and some verses that she had composed shortly before her death — all his father's letters to him, from the time that he first sent him forth, a gallant boy girt with the sword of a high race, to win renown, through all that period when the son, growing up in glory, shone back upon his father's name the light that he had thence received, and paid amply all the cares which had been bestowed upon him, by the joy of his great deeds, up to that sad moment, when, with a trembling hand, the dying parent announced to his son the commencement and progress of the fatal malady that carried him to the grave. — All these were to be opened, examined, perhaps dispersed by the cold, if not by the scorn-

ful; and all the sanctities of private affection violated.

Such and a thousand other such feelings, rapid, innumerable, and, in some instances, contradictory to and opposing each other, rushed through his bosom in a moment at the announcement of the officer's errand. The whole facts of his situation, in short, with every minute particular, were conjured up before his eyes, as in a picture, by those few words; and the first effort of deliberate thought was made while De Cantal went on to say, "As I have said, Monsieur de Morseiul, it is my wish to save you any unnecessary pain, and therefore I have ordered the carriage, which is to convey you to the Bastille, to wait at the further end of the first street. A couple of musketeers and myself will accompany you inside; so that there will be no unnecessary parade about the matter: and I doubt not that you will be liberated shortly."

"I trust it may be so, Sir," replied the Count; "and am obliged to you for your kindness. I have violated no law, divine or human; and though, of course, I have many sins to atone towards my God, yet I have none towards my King. I am quite ready to accompany you, but I suppose that I shall not be permitted to

return to my own house, even to seek those things which may be necessary for my comfort in the Bastille."

"Quite impossible, Sir," replied the officer. "It would be as much as my head is worth to permit you to set foot in your own dwelling."

The thoughts of the young Count, as may well be supposed, were turned, at that moment, particularly to Clémence de Marly ; and he was most anxious, on every account, to make his servants acquainted with the fact of his having been arrested, in the hope that Riquet would have the good sense to convey the tidings to the Hôtel de Rouvré. To have explained this, in any degree, to the officer who had him in charge, would have been to frustrate the whole design ; and therefore he replied,

"Far be it from me, Sir, to wish you to do any thing but your duty : but you see, as I have been accustomed, throughout my life, to somewhat perhaps too much luxury, I should be very desirous of procuring some changes of apparel. That, I am aware, may be permitted to me unless I am to be in the strictest and most severe kind of imprisonment which the Bastille admits of. You know by the orders you have

received whether such is to be the case or not, and of course I do not wish you to deviate from your orders. Am I to be kept *au secret*?"

"Oh dear no, not at all," replied the officer. "The order merely implies your safe custody; and, probably, unless some private commands are given farther, you will have what is called the great liberties of the Bastille: but still that would not, by any means, justify me in permitting you to go to your own house."

"No," replied the Count; "but it renders it perfectly possible—if you are, as I believe, disposed to treat a person in my unfortunate situation with kindness and liberality—for you to send down one of your own attendants to my valet, Jerome Riquet, with my orders to send me up, in the course of the day, such clothes as may be necessary for a week. Let the message be verbal, so as to guard against any dangerous communication; and let the clothes be addressed to the care of the governor of the prison, in order that they may be inspected before they are given to me."

"Oh, to that, of course, there can be no objection," replied the young officer. "We will do it immediately. But we must lose no time, Monsieur de Morseiul, for the order is counter-

signed by Monsieur de Louvois, and you know he likes prompt obedience."

The Count accompanied him at a rapid pace, deriving no slight consolation under the unhappy circumstances in which he was placed, at the idea of Clémence being fully informed of the cause of his not appearing at the time he had promised. At the spot which Monsieur de Cantal had mentioned, was found a plain carriage, with a coachman and lackey in grey, and two musketeers of the guard seated quietly in the inside. While the Count was entering the vehicle, the officer called the lackey to his side and said, "Run down as fast as possible to the house of the Count de Morseiul, and inquire for his valet. What did you say his name is, Monsieur de Morseiul?"

"Jerome Riquet," said the Count.

"Ay, Jerome Riquet," said the officer. "Inquire for his valet, Jerome Riquet: tell him that the King has judged it right that his master should pass a short time in the Bastille, and that, therefore, he must send up thither to-night, addressed to the care of the governor, what clothes he judges the Count may require. The house is next door but one to that of Monsieur de Meaux. Run quick, and take the little alley

at the end of the street, so that you may join us at the corner of the road."

The young officer then entered the carriage, and the coachman drove on; but before they proceeded along the high road they were obliged to pause for a moment or two, in order to give time for the arrival of the lackey, who, when he came, spoke a few words through the window to Monsieur de Cantal, in the course of which the word "Exempt" was frequently audible.

"That is unpleasant," said the young officer, turning to the Count: "I find that an Exempt has been sent to your house already,—to seal up your papers, I suppose; and, on hearing the man give the message to one of your servants, he was very angry, it seems, sending word to wait for him here; but, as I am not under his orders or authority, I think I shall even tell the coachman to go on."

He said this in a hesitating tone, however, evidently afraid that he had done wrong; and before he could execute his purpose of bidding the carriage proceed, the lackey said, "Here comes the Exempt, Sir. Here he is!"

In a moment after, a tall, meager, gaunt-looking man, dressed in the peculiar robes of an Exempt of the court, with a nose extraordi-

narily red, scarcely any eyebrows, and a mouth which seemed capable of swallowing the vehicle that he approached and all that it contained, came up to the side of the carriage, and spoke to the young officer through the window. The words that passed between them seemed to be sharp; and, at length, the Exempt exclaimed, in a louder tone, so as to be completely audible to the Count—although his articulation was of that round spluttering kind which rendered it very difficult to make out what he said—"I shall do so, however, Sir; I shall do so, however. I have authority for what I do. I will suffer no such communications as these, and I will not quit the carriage till I have seen the prisoner safely lodged in the hands of the governor of the Bastille."

"Well, Sir," replied the officer, a little heated; "if you choose to overstep your duty I cannot help it, and certainly shall not attempt to prevent your going with the coachman if you think fit. In the inside of the carriage you shall not come, for there I will guard my prisoner myself."

"That you may do, Sir, if you like," cried the Exempt, shaking the awful mass of wig in which his head was plunged: "but I will take care that there shall be no more communi-

cations.—Linen! What the devil does a prisoner in the Bastille want with linen? Why, in the very first packet sent to him there might be all sorts of treasonable things written upon the linen. Have we not heard of ink of sympathy and all manner of things?”

“Well, well, Sir,” exclaimed the young officer: “I saw no harm in what I was doing, or else I should not have done it. But get up, if you are going to get up, for I shall order the coachman to go on.”

The Exempt sprang up the high and difficult ascent which led to a coachbox of those days, with a degree of activity which could hardly have been expected from a person of his pompous dignity, and the coach then drove on upon its weary way to Paris.

“A very violent and self-conceited person, indeed, that seems to be,” said the Count. “Do you know him?”

“Not I,” replied the young officer, “though he threatens to make me know him pretty sufficiently, by complaining to Louvois about sending for these cursed clothes of yours.”

The officer was evidently out of temper; and the Count, therefore, left him to himself, and fell into a fit of musing over his own situa-

tion. That fit of musing, dark and painful as it was, lasted, without cessation, till the vehicle entered one of the suburbs of the great city of Paris. There, however, it met with an interruption of a very unexpected kind; for, in trying to pass between two heavy carts, which were going along in opposite directions, the coachman contrived to get the wheels of the carriage locked with those of both the other vehicles; and with such force was this done that the lackey behind was thrown down and hurt, the Exempt himself nearly pitched off the coachbox, and obliged to cling with both his hands, while the coachman lost his hat and the reins.

The idea of making his escape crossed the mind of the Count de Morseiul; but he evidently saw that even if he were out of the carriage, surrounded as he was by a great number of people, without any large sum of money upon his person, and with the eyes of the officer, the musketeers, and the Exempt upon him, it would be vain to make the attempt.

To render the situation of the vehicle as bad as possible, one of the horses, either irritated by the uncouth and not very gentle terms with which the coachman attempted to back out of the difficulty, or galled by part of the cart

pressing upon it, began to kick most vehemently ; and Monsieur de Cantal, the officer, having previously sent the two musketeers to aid the coachman and the Exempt in disentangling the carriage, now showed a strong inclination to go himself. After looking anxiously at the Count de Morseiul for a moment, he at length said, "I must either go and set those men right, or suffer the carriage to be kicked to pieces. If I go, Monsieur de Morseiul, will you give me your word not to try to escape?"

The Count paused for an instant ; but then the same consideration returned upon him, and he replied, "Go, Sir, go : I do give you my word."

The officer then sprang out ; but scarcely had he been away a moment, when the head of the Exempt appeared looking in at the window. "Hist, hist, Monsieur de Morseiul !" he said, in a voice totally different from that which he had used before, and which was wonderfully familiar to the ears of the Count ; "hist, hist ! On the very first linen you receive, there will be information written for you. It will be invisible to all eyes till it is held to the fire. But the flame of a strong lamp will do, if you cannot sham an ague and get some wood to warm you."

“ I can scarcely believe my eyes,” said the Count, in the same low voice.

“ Do not doubt them, do not doubt them,” said the Exempt. “ I knew of your arrest before you knew of it yourself, but could not warn you, and was making all ready when the man came to the hotel. I have sacrificed much for you, Count ; as goodly a pair of eyebrows as ever valet had in this world ; and I dare not blow my nose for fear of wiping off the paint : Louvois outwitted me this morning, and now I’ll outwit him if I have but time. Heavens, how that beast is plunging and kicking ! The pin I ran into its stomach is sticking there yet I suppose ; ay, she’s quieter now ; here they come, and I must splutter.—Monsieur,” he said, as the officer now returned to the side of the carriage, “ Monsieur, this is guarding your prisoner securely, is it not ? Here I come to the window and find not a single soul to prevent his escaping, when he might have got out in a moment, and run up the Rue de Bièvre, and passed through the Rue de l’Ecole, and across the Place de l’Université, and then down to the river ——”

“ Psha !” said the officer impatiently ; “ let me have no more of this impertinence, Sir.

The Count gave me his word that he would not escape. If I deliver my prisoner safely at the Bastille, that is sufficient, and I will not have my conduct questioned. If you have any complaint to make, make it to Monsieur de Louvois. Come, get up, Sir, don't answer ; the carriage is now clear, and enough of it left together to carry us to the Bastille. Go on, coachman."

The coachman, however, pertinaciously remained in a state of tranquillity, till the Exempt was once more comfortably seated by his side ; and then the carriage rolling on through the back streets of the capital, made a little turn by the Rue de Jean Beausire, into the Rue St. Antoine, and approached the gates of that redoubted prison, in which so many of the best and noblest in France have lingered out, at different times, a part of their existence. To few, to very few, have the tall gloomy towers of that awful fortress appeared without creating feelings of pain and apprehension ; and however confident he might be of his own innocence, however great might be his trust in the good providence and protection of God, however strong he might be in a good cause and a firm spirit, it cannot be denied that Albert of Morseiul felt deeply and painfully, and with an anxious and a sickening

heart, his entrance into that dark solitary abode of crime, and sorrow, and suffering.

The carriage drew up just opposite the drawbridge, and the officer getting out, left his prisoner in charge of the two musketeers, and went forward to speak to the officer on guard at the gates. To him he notified, in due form, that he had brought a prisoner, with orders from the King for his incarceration; and the carriage was kept for some time standing there, while the officer on guard proceeded to the dwelling of the governor, to demand the keys of the great gates. When he had obtained them and returned, the doors were opened; the guard was turned out under arms; the great drawbridge let down; the bell which communicated with the interior of the building rung; and the vehicle containing the Count, slowly rolled on into the outer court, called the Cour du Gouvernement.

There the carriage paused, the governor of the prison having expressed his intention of coming down to receive the prisoner from the hands of the officer who brought him: otherwise, the carriage would have gone on into the inner court. A short pause ensued, and at length the well-known Besmaux was seen approaching, presenting exactly that appearance

which might be expected from his character ; for the traits of debauchery, levity, and ferocity, which distinguished his actual life, had stamped themselves upon his countenance in ineffacable characters.

“ Ah, good day, Monsieur de Morseiul,” he said, as the door of the carriage opened, and the Count descended. “ Monsieur de Cantal, your very humble servant. Gentlemen, both, you had better step into the Corps de Garde, where I will receive your prisoner, Monsieur de Cantal, and read the letters for his detention.”

Thus saying, with a slow and important step he walked into the building, seated himself, called for pen and ink, and a light, and then read the King’s letter for the arrest and imprisonment of the Count de Morseiul.

“ Monsieur de Louvois is varying these letters every day,” he said ; “ one never knows what one is doing. However, there stands the King’s name, and that is quite enough ; so, Monsieur de Morseiul, you are welcome to the Bastille. You are to have our great liberties, I suppose. I must beg you to give me your sword, however, and also every thing you have about your person, if you please ; letters, papers, money, jewels, and every thing else, in short.

except your seal, or your signet ring, which you keep for the purposes about to be explained to you."

With very painful feelings the Count unbuckled his sword, and laid it down upon the table. He then gave up all the money that he possessed, one or two ordinary papers of no import, and the other usual articles of the same kind, which are borne about the person. The note which he had received from Clémence in the morning, he had luckily destroyed. While this was doing, the governor continued to write, examining the different things that he put down before him, and he then said, "Is this all, Sir?"

"It is," replied the Count, "upon my word."

"One of the men must put his hands in your pocket, Count," said the governor; "that is a ceremony every one has to undergo here." The prisoner shut his teeth hard, but made no remark, and offered no resistance, though, if he had given way to his feelings, he would certainly have dashed the man to the ground at once, who, with unceremonious hands, now searched his person. When that also was over, Besmaux wrote down a few more words at the end of the list of things he had made out, and handed it to the Count to read. The only observation that

the young nobleman made, was, that the governor had put down his sword as having a silver hilt, when the hilt was of gold.

“ Ah, it is of gold, is it ? ” said de Besmaux, taking it up and looking at it, while several of the attendants who stood round grinned from ear to ear. “ Well, we will alter it, and put it down gold. Now, Monsieur de Morseiul, will you have the goodness to sign that paper, which, with these letters, we fold up thus ? and now with the seal which you retain, you will have the goodness to seal them, and write your name round the seal.”

With all these forms the Count complied, and the governor then intimated to him, that he was ready to conduct him into the interior of the Bastille, the spot where they then were, though within the walls and drawbridge, being actually considered as without the château.

“ Here, then, I take leave of you, Monsieur de Morseiul,” said the officer who had brought him thither, “ and I will do my best, on my return to Versailles, to insure that the clothes you want shall be sent, notwithstanding the interference of that impertinent Exempt, who took himself off on the outside of the drawbridge, and has doubtless gone back to lay his com-

plaint against me before Louvois. I know the King, however; and knowing that he wishes no one to be treated with harshness or severity, have therefore no fear of the consequences."

The Count held out his hand to him frankly. "I am very much obliged to you, Monsieur de Cantal," he said, "for the kindness and politeness you have shown me. It is at such moments as these, that kindness and politeness become real benefits."

The officer took his hand respectfully, and then, without more words, retired; the carriage passed out; the gates creaked upon their hinges; and the heavy drawbridge swung slowly up, with a jarring sound of chains, and heavy iron work, sadly harmonious with the uses of the building, which they shut out from the world.

The governor then led the way towards the large and heavy mass of gloomy masonry, with its eight tall gaunt towers, which formed the real prison of the Bastille, and approached the gate in the centre, that looked towards the gardens and buildings of the arsenal. The drawbridge there was by this time down, and the gates were open for the admission of the prisoner; while what was called the staff of the Bastille stood ready to receive him, and the guard of

the grand court was drawn up in line on either side.

“ You see we have an extensive court here,” said the governor, leading the way. “ It is somewhat dark to be sure, on account of the buildings being so high ; but, however, some of our people, when they have been accustomed to it for a year or two, find it cheerful enough. We will put you, I think, Monsieur de Morseiul, into what is called the Tower of Liberty, both because the name is a pleasant name—though it is but a name after all, either here or elsewhere—and also because it is close to the library, and as long as you have the great liberties, as they are called, you may go in there, and amuse yourself. Most of you Huguenots, I believe, are somewhat of bookworms, and when a man cannot find many of the living to talk to, he likes just as well to talk to the dead. I do not suppose, that, like some of our inmates here on their first arrival, you are going to mope and pine like a half-starved cat, or a sick hen. It is hard to bear at first I acknowledge ; but there’s nothing like bearing a thing gaily after all. This way, Monsieur de Morseiul, this way, and I will show you your apartment.”

He accordingly led him to the extreme angle

of the grand court on the left hand, where a large transverse mass of architecture, containing the library, the hall of the council, and various other apartments, separated that part from the lesser court, called the Court of the well. A small stone doorway opened the way to a narrow spiral staircase, which made the head dizzy with its manifold turning; and about half way up the steps the governor paused, and opened a door which communicated by a narrow but crooked passage, with a single tolerable sized chamber, handsomely furnished.

“You see we treat you well, Monsieur de Morseiul,” said Besmaux; “and if any thing can be done to make your residence here pleasant, we shall not fail to do it. There is but little use, if any, of causing doors to be locked or sentries to be placed. Some of the guards, or some of the officers of the staff, will be very willing to show you as much as is right of the rest of the building: and, in the mean time, can I serve you?”

“In nothing, I am afraid,” replied the Count. “I have neither clothes, nor baggage, nor any thing else with me, which will put me to some inconvenience till they send it to me; but I understand that orders have been given to that

effect already; and I should only be glad to have any clothes and linen that may arrive as soon as possible."

"I will see to it, I will see to it," replied Besmaux. "You have dined of course, Count; but to-night you will sup with me."

"If my stay here is to be long," said the Count, after thanking the governor for his invitation, "I should, of course, be very glad to have the attendance of a domestic. I care not much, indeed, whether it be one of my own, or whether it be one with which you can supply me for the time, but I am not used to be without some sort of attendance."

The governor smiled. "You must not be nice in the Bastille, Monsieur de Morseiul," he said; "we all do with few attendants here, but we will see what can be done for you. At present we know nothing, but that here you are. The order for your reception is of that kind which leaves every thing doubtful but the fact that, for the time, you are not to be confined very strictly; and, indeed, as the letter is somewhat informal, as every thing is that comes from the hands of Monsieur de Louvois, I must write to him again for farther information. As soon as I receive it, the whole shall be arranged

as far as I can to your satisfaction. In the mean time we will give you every indulgence, as far as our own general rules will allow, though, perhaps, you will think that share of indulgence very small."

The Count expressed his thanks in commonplace terms, well knowing the character of Besmaux, and that his fair speeches only promised a degree of courtesy which his actions generally failed to fulfil.

After lingering for a moment or two, the governor left his prisoner in the abode assigned to him, and returned to his own dwelling, without locking the door of the apartment.

There are states of mind in which the necessity of calm contemplation is so strong and overpowering, that none of the ordinary motives which affect our nature have any influence upon us for the time,—states in which even vanity the most irritable, and curiosity the most active of our moral prompters in this world, slumber inactive, and leave thought and judgment paramount. Such was the case with the Count de Morseiul. Although he had certainly been interested with every thing concerning the prison, which was to be his abode for an undefined length of time; although all that took place indicative

of his future destiny was, of course, not without attraction and excitement, he had grown weary of the formalities of his entrance into the Bastille, less because they were wearisome in themselves than because he longed to be alone, and to have a few minutes for calm and silent reflection.

When he did come to reflect, however, the prospect presented was dark, gloomy, and sad. He was cut off from the escape he had meditated. The only thing that could have saved him from the most imminent dangers and difficulties, the only scheme which he had been able to fall upon to secure even the probability of peace and safety upon earth, had been now frustrated. The charges likely to be brought against him, if once averred by the decision of a court of justice, were such as, he well knew, could not and would not be followed by pardon; and when he looked at the chances that existed of those charges being sanctioned, confirmed, and declared just, by any commission that might sit to try him, he found that the probabilities were altogether against him; and that if party feeling biassed the opinion of one single magistrate, his cause was utterly lost. In cases where circumstantial evidence is every thing — and

therein lies the horror and danger of judging by circumstantial evidence — so light a word, so small a turn will give a completely different view to the whole circumstances of any case, will so completely prejudice the question, and bias the minds of hearers, that he was quite aware if any zealous Catholics should be engaged in the task of persecuting him to the last, he could scarcely hope to escape from such serious imputations, as would justify perhaps his permanent detention, if not his death. He had been at the meeting of the Protestants on the moor, which though not illegal at the time, had been declared to be so since. He had then addressed the people, and had exhorted them to tranquillity and to peace; but where were the witnesses to come from in order to prove that such was the case. He had gone unarmed to that meeting; but others had been there in arms and with arms concealed. He, himself, with his own hand, had struck the first blow, from which such awful consequences had sprung; but how was he to prove the provocation which he had, in the first instance, received; or the protection which he had afterwards given to the base and unworthy young man, who had escaped from death by his means,

only to become a murderer the moment after. The only witnesses that he could call were persons of the party inimical to the court, who might now be found with difficulty — when emigration was taking place from every part of France, — who would only be partially believed if they could be heard, and who would place themselves in danger by bearing testimony on his behalf.

The witnesses against him would be the hired miscreants who had fired into a body of unoffending people, but who were of the religion of the judges, the unscrupulous adherents of the cause to which those judges were bound by every tie of interest and of prejudice, and who were serving under a monarch that, on one terrible occasion, had stepped in to overrule the decision of a court of justice, and to inflict severer punishment than even his own creatures had dared to assign. Death, therefore, seemed to be the only probable end of his imprisonment, death, or eternal loss of liberty ! and the Count knew the court, and the character of those with whom he had to deal, too well, to derive any degree of consolation from the lenity with which he was treated at first.

Had he been now in heart and mind, as he was not very long before, when quitting the army on the signature of the truce he had returned to the home of his ancestors, the prospect would have been far less terrible to him, far less painful. His heart was then in some degree solitary, his mind was comparatively alone in the world. He had spent the whole of his active life in scenes of danger and of strife. He had confronted death so often, that the lean and horrid monster had lost his terrors and become familiar with one, who had seemed to seek his acquaintance as if in sport. His ties to the world had been few; for the existence of bright days, and happy careless moments, and splendid fortune, and the means of luxury and enjoyment at command, are not the things that bind and attach us to life. The tie, the strong, the mighty tie of deep and powerful affection to some being, or beings, like himself, had been wanting. There were many that he liked; there were many that he esteemed; there were many he protected and supported even at that time; but he knew and felt that if he were gone the next moment, they would be liked, and esteemed, and supported, and protected by others, and

would feel the same, or nearly the same, towards those who succeeded as towards him, when he had passed away from the green and sunny earth and left them to the care of newer friends.

But now other ties had arisen around him — ties, the strength, the durability, the firm pressure of which he had never known before. There was now a being on the earth to whom he was attached by feelings that can only once be felt, for whom he, himself, would have been ready to sacrifice every thing else ; who for him, and for his love, had shewn herself willing to cast from her all of those bright and pageant-like days of splendour, in which she had once seemed to take so much delight. The tie, the strong tie of human affection — the rending of which is the great and agonising pang of death — had twined itself round his heart, and bound every feeling and every thought. The great, the surpassing quality of sentient being, the capability of loving, and being loved, had risen up to crush and to leave void all the lesser things of life, but also to give death terrors that it knew not before ; to make the grave the bitter parting place where joy ends for ever, and to poison the shaft that lays

us low with venom that is felt in agony ere the dark, dreamless sleep succeeds and extinguishes all.

But was this all that rendered his situation now more terrible than it had been before? Alas, no! The sense of religion was strong, and he might confidently trust that though earthly passion ended with the grave, and the mortal fire of his love for Clémence de Marly would there become extinct — he might confidently trust that, in another world, with his love for her exalted as well as purified, rendered more intense and sublime, though less passionate and human, they should meet again, known to each other, bound together by the immortal memory of vast affection, and only distinct from other spirits, bright and happy as themselves, by the glorious consciousness of love, and the intense happiness of having loved well, loved nobly, and to the last.

Such might have been his consolation in the prospect of parting with her who had become so dear to him, if he had left her in calm and peaceful security, in a happy land, and without danger or difficulty surrounding her. But when he thought of the religion she had embraced, of the perils which surrounded her at

every step, of the anguish which would fall upon her at his fate, of the utterly unprotected, uncomforted, unconsolated state in which she must remain, the heart of the strong warrior failed, and the trust of the Christian was drowned in human tears.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

IN such dark anticipations and gloomy reflections, as we have mentioned in the end of the last chapter, the Count de Morseiul passed the solitary hours, till a servant appeared to conduct him to the supper table of the governor. Had he not wished to think, indeed, he might have easily found amusement, either in the court below, where a number of the other prisoners were walking, or in the small library of the château; but he did wish to think, and however sad and sombre the stream of thought might be at that moment, its course only seemed too soon interrupted.

The governor was civil, and even intended to be very affable; but Albert of Morseiul was not of a character to be amused with the anecdotes of a debauched soldier's life; and the only variety which the conversation of Besmaux afforded were tales of the regency of Anne of Austria, which, though they might at any other moment have served to entertain an

idle hour, were too light and insignificant to take hold of a mind agitated and writhing like that of the Count.

The governor thought his guest very dull, and, after having made various essays to enliven him, he proposed that they should sit down to play for sums, written upon pieces of paper, which were to be accounted for after the Count's liberation. The young nobleman would have certainly lost the good opinion of Besmaux for ever by declining this proposal, had it not so occurred that two incidents intervened which prevented him from pressing it. The first was the arrival of a large packet of linen and other clothes for the use of the Count; and the governor, who found a real pleasure in the execution of the task of a gaoler, proceeded to examine with his own eyes and hands every separate article which had been sent. It may be supposed that, after the intimation which he had received on the road, the young Count's heart felt no slight agitation and interest during the scrutiny; but if any thing was written in the manner which Riquet had stated, no discovery thereof was made; and, having completely satisfied himself, Besmaux ordered the packet to be carried to the chamber of the Count.

The little excitement thus produced had scarcely worn away, when the great bell was heard to ring, and the officer upon guard appeared to demand the keys. According to the usual form the governor demanded — “For whose admission?”

“For the admission,” said the officer, reading from a scrap of paper, “for the admission of Louis de Rohan, called the Chevalier de Rohan.”

The governor started up in some surprise — “On what charge?” he demanded.

“For high treason,” replied the officer; and Besmaux immediately gave orders for the Chevalier to be brought to his apartments. “Monsieur de Morseiul,” he said, “you will be good enough to follow that porte-clef, who will conduct you back to your chamber. Do you feel it cold? — for the King allows firing.”

“I have felt it slightly cold,” the Count replied, “and of course the state of a prisoner does not tend to warm the heart.”

“Give wood to the Count in his chamber,” said Besmaux, to one of the turnkeys, who had entered at the same time with the officer on guard; “and now, good night, Count. No word to the prisoner, if you pass him on the stairs!”

The Count rose and departed; and, as the governor had anticipated, met the Chevalier de Rohan at the foot of the stairs. That unfortunate gentleman was guarded by a musketeer on either side, and a man holding a torch preceding him. The moment that his eye fell upon the Count de Morseuil, he stopped, and appeared as if he were about to speak : but an officer who was behind, and, in whom the Count de Morseuil instantly recognised the Marquis of Brissac, major of the King's guard, exclaimed aloud, " Pass on, Monsieur de Rohan ! "

The Count, who certainly had no desire to hold any communications with him, merely bowed his head, and followed by the turnkey, passed out into the court. Though Brissac knew him well, he took not the slightest notice of him as he passed, and the Count was conducted to his chamber in the tower of liberty, as it was called, where firing and lights were almost immediately afterwards brought him. On leaving him, however, the turnkey showed, by locking the heavy door without, that the name of the tower had but little real meaning, and the harsh sound of the grating iron fell heavy and painfully upon the Count's ear.

There was, however, the hope before him of

receiving some intelligence from his friends without, and as soon as he had made sure that the turnkey was gone for the night, he eagerly opened the packet of clothes that had been sent, and endeavoured, by the means which had been pointed out, to discover any thing which might be written on them. At first he was disappointed, and was beginning to fear that Riquet had been prevented from executing the purpose which he had entertained. At length, however, as he held one of the handkerchiefs before the fire, some slight yellow lines began to appear, grew gradually darker and darker, and assumed the form of letters, words, lines, and sentences. The first thing that was written at the top was in the hand of the valet himself, and contained words of hope and encouragement. It was to the following effect: —

“ Fear not; you shall soon be free. The lady has been told of all. The priest has gone safely back to Poitou. No suspicion attaches to any one, and means are taking to do away the evil.”

The next sentences were in a different handwriting; and perhaps the young Count might not have been able to recognise whose it was — so different did it seem upon the linen, and in

that ink, from the usual writing of Clémence, — had not the words been sufficient to show him from whom it proceeded.

“ Fear not, dear Albert,” the writing went ; “ I have heard all and grieve, but do not despond. I have been sent for to see one to-morrow morning early, who is all-powerful. She loved me in my childhood; she promised me many things in my youth, which I was too proud to accept; but I will now cast all pride away for the sake of him I love.”

A few lines more were written still further down, but as the Count was turning eagerly to read them, numerous sounds were heard from the court below, the clang of soldiers grounding their arms, and voices speaking, and the moment after, various footsteps might be distinguished ascending the staircase which came towards the room. Fearful that he should be discovered, the Count concealed the handkerchief in his bosom; but the steps passed by the door of his apartment, and, immediately after, heavy foot-falls were heard in the room above, with voices speaking in sharp and angry tones. Those sounds soon ceased above, however; four or five persons were heard to descend the stairs, and then all became quiet, except that a quick

footstep was still heard pacing backwards and forwards in the apartment over head.

“That is the Chevalier de Rohan,” thought the Count. “What crime I wonder can that weak libertine have committed, to deserve the rigorous imprisonment to which it seems he is to be subjected?”

With such brief thought, however, he dismissed the subject from his mind, and turned once more to the writing. By this time it had nearly vanished; but being again exposed to the fire it re-appeared, though more faintly than before. Fearful of interruption, the Count turned to the last lines which he had not read. They seemed to him, as far as he could judge, to be written in the hand of the Chevalier d’Evrans, whom, to say sooth, in the joys and fears and agitations of the few preceding days, he had nearly forgotten.

“I have just returned to Paris, dear Albert,” it said, “having gone down to Poitou to secure evidence, which they would never have suffered to transpire, if some friend of yours had not been upon the spot. I have secured it. Fear not, therefore, for I and your belle Clémence are labouring together to set you free.”

Oh, human nature, strange and extraordinary

state of existence, how many contradictions dost thou contain ! Although filled with such good hopes, although containing such proofs of friendship, although conveying such important intelligence, the lines written by the Chevalier d'Evran were not altogether pleasing to the Count de Morseiul, and he felt sensations that he was angry with himself for feeling, but which all his schooling of his own heart could scarcely banish.

“ I shall hate myself,” he continued, “ if I feel thus. Must there ever be some counterbalancing thing in life and in feeling, to poize the bad against the good, and to make us less happy, less wise, less generous than we otherwise might be ? Here new sensations have sprung up in my bosom, of a deeper and a finer kind than I ever knew before ; and must there come some petty jealousy, some small, low, mean want of confidence, even in those I esteem and love to debase me as much as those other feelings might elevate me ? I will think of such things no more ; and will only think of Louis with gratitude and affection.”

Thus saying, or rather thus thinking, he re-read the lines that had been written by Clémence, and found therein a balm and a consolation

which healed all the evil of the other. Having done so, his next care was to efface the writing; but that he found by no means difficult, damping the handkerchief in the cruise of water which had been left for him, and which, in a few minutes, left not a vestige of the lines which had been traced for his eye alone. He sat up for some time after this examination, soothed and calmed by the tidings he had received, and certainly far more tranquil in every respect than during the first few hours of his confinement.

The waning of the lights, however, which had been given to him, warned him, at length, that it was time to retire to rest, and after some brief prayers to the Almighty for guidance, protection, and deliverance, he undressed himself, extinguished the lights, and lay down to seek repose; but it was in vain that he did so, for as he lay on the small prison bed which was allotted to him, and gazed round upon the massy walls of the chamber in which he was confined, with the flickering light of the half-extinguished fire flashing from time to time on all the various objects round about, the sensation of imprisonment, of the utter loss of liberty, of being cut off from all correspondence

or communication with his fellow-men, of being in the power and at the mercy of others, without any appeal against their will, or any means of deliverance from their hands, came upon him more strongly, more forcibly than ever, and made a heart, not easily bent or affected by any apprehensions, sink with a cold feeling of deep and utter despondency.

Thus passed several hours till, at length, weariness overcame thought, and he obtained sleep towards the morning. He was awakened by the entrance of one of the turnkeys, accompanied by the major of the Bastille; but the tidings which the latter officer brought to the Count de Morseiul were by no means pleasant, or calculated to confirm the hopes that the words of Clémence and the Chevalier d'Evran had held out to him.

“ I am sorry to tell you, Monsieur de Morseiul,” he said, “ that the governor last night received orders from Monsieur de Louvois to place you in stricter confinement, and he is, therefore, obliged to say that you can no longer be permitted to quit your chamber. Any thing that can be done, consistent with his duty, to render your confinement less painful to you, shall be done, depend upon it.”

The officer was then bowing, as if to retire ; but the Count stopped him by asking, "Is there any objection to my inquiring, Sir, whether there is a cause assigned for this new order?"

"In regard to that I am as ignorant as yourself," replied the major. "All I can tell is, that the order was brought by Monsieur de Brissac at the same time that he conveyed hither the Chevalier de Rohan," and, without waiting for any further questions, he quitted the room in haste; and the turnkey, having brought the Count his breakfast, and, as far as possible, arranged the room with some degree of neatness, followed the major and locked the door.

The full horrors of imprisonment now fell upon the Count de Morseiul, and the day wore away without his holding any further intercourse with any human being, except when his dinner and his supper were brought to him by one of the turnkeys. We need not pause upon his sensations, nor describe minutely all the dark and horrible anticipations which rose, like phantoms, to people his solitary chamber. Night came at length, and this night, at least, he slept; for the exhaustion of his corporeal

frame, by the intense emotions of his mind, was far greater than that which could have been produced by a day of the most unusual exercise.

Day had scarcely dawned on the following morning, however, when he was roused by two of the officers of the prison entering his chamber, and desiring him to rise, as an officer from the King was waiting to convey him to the royal chamber, at the arsenal, where a commission was sitting for the purpose of interrogating him and his accomplices. The Count made no observation, but hastened to do as he was directed; and, as soon as he was dressed, he descended the narrow and tortuous staircase into the great court of the Bastille, where he found the soldiers of the garrison drawn up in arms on either side, together with a number of officers belonging to the staff of the garrison, various turnkeys and other gaolers, and in their hands, evidently as prisoners, the unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, and an old white-headed man, apparently of seventy years of age, with a shrewd and cunning countenance, more strongly expressive of acuteness than vigour of mind.

Without suffering him to speak with any one, the officers of the prison placed him in file immediately after the Chevalier de Rohan — a

gaoler, however, interposing between each of the prisoners and the one that followed; — and thus, between a double row of soldiery, they marched on into the *Cour du Gouvernement*, as if they were about to be conducted to the house of the governor. When they reached that court, however, they turned at once to the left, mounted a flight of steps leading to a raised terrace which overlooked the water, and then passing onward, approached the grating which separated that court from the gardens of the arsenal.

At the grating appeared a large body of musketeers, commanded by an officer of the name of Jouvelle, who had served under the Count de Morseuil himself, and into his hands the officers of the Bastille delivered their prisoners, who were then marched, under a strong escort, to the arsenal, where the commission was sitting. All the gates of the gardens and of the building itself, the Count remarked, were in the hands of the musketeers of the King, and not another individual was to be seen besides the soldiery, in the gardens usually so thronged with the good citizens of Paris.

Passing through several of the narrow and intricate passages of the building, the three

prisoners were placed in a room which seemed to have been destined for a military mess-room ; and, while they were kept separate by their guards, an inferior officer was sent out to see whether the commission was ready to proceed. In a few minutes he returned with two officers of the court, who demanded the presence of Louis Chevalier de Rohan.

The interrogation of this prisoner lasted for a great length of time ; but, at the end of about an hour and a half, the same officers re-appeared, demanding the presence of Affinius Vandenen-den, upon which the old man, whom we have mentioned, rose and followed them out of the room. The Chevalier, however, had not returned with the officers, and during the space of half an hour longer the Count de Morseiul remained in suspense, in regard to what was proceeding. At length the officers once more appeared, and with them the captain of the musketeers, de Jouveller, who, while the ushers pronounced the name of " Albert Count of Morseiul," passed by the prisoner, as if to speak to one of the soldiers, saying, in a low voice, as he did so, " Be of good cheer, Count ; they have said nothing to criminate you."

The Count passed on without reply, and fol-

lowed the ushers into another chamber at the farther end of the passage, where he found a number of lawyers and counsellors of state assembled as a royal commission, and presided by the well-known La Reynie. The aspect of the room was not that of a court of justice, and it was evident that the commissioners met simply for the purpose of carrying on the preliminary interrogatories. The Count was furnished with a seat, and after a whispering consultation, for a moment, between La Reynie and one of his brethren, the former commenced the interrogation of the Count by assuring him of the clemency and mercy of the King's disposition, and adjuring him to tell, frankly and straight-forwardly, the whole truth, as the only means of clearing his reputation, and re-establishing himself in the royal favour.

To this exordium the Count de Morseiul merely replied by an inclination of the head, very well knowing that with some of the gentlemen whom he saw before him it was advisable to be as niggardly of speech as possible. La Reynie then proceeded to ask how long he had been acquainted with the Chevalier de Rohan, and the Count replied that he had known him for many years.

“When did you see him last?” demanded the judge, “and where?”

“In the gardens of Versailles,” answered the Count, calmly, not five minutes before I was myself arrested.”

“And upon what occasion,” demanded the judge, “did you see him previously?”

“I saw him,” replied the Count, “when I visited the Duc de Rouvré, at Poitiers, and once also upon the road between Paris and Versailles, about three or four days ago.”

“Are you sure that these are the only days that you have seen him?” demanded the judge. “Recollect yourself, Monsieur le Comte. I think you must have forgotten.”

“No, I have not,” replied the Count. “I have only seen him on these two occasions since I arrived in Paris, and two or three times during my stay at Poitiers.”

“Ay, there is the fact,” said La Reynie. “You saw him frequently at Poitiers.”

“I also saw various blacksmiths, and lackeys, and horse-boys,” said the Count, unable to conceive what connection there could exist between any charges against himself and those against the Chevalier de Rohan, who was known to be a zealous Catholic, “and with them, the black-

smiths, lackeys, and horse-boys, I had as much to do as I had with the Chevalier de Rohan, and no more."

"And pray," continued La Reynie, in the same tone, "what private conversations took place between you and the Chevalier at Poitiers? To the best of your recollection repeat the substance thereof."

The Count smiled. "To the best of my recollection, then," he said, "the substance was as follows: 'Good day, Count de Morseiul. Good morning, Monsieur de Rohan. What a beautiful day it is, Monsieur de Morseiul. It is the most charming weather I remember. There is a sad want of rain, Monsieur le Chevalier, and I fear the poor peasantry will suffer. Do you go out with the duke to hunt to-day? I think not, for my horses are tired.' Such, Sir, is the substance of the only private conversations that took place between myself and the Chevalier at Poitiers."

"Was that all, Monsieur de Morseiul?" demanded La Reynie, with tolerable good humour. "Are you sure you have forgot nothing of equal importance?"

"I believe I have not forgot one word," replied the Count, "except that, on one occasion,

Monsieur de Rohan said to me, ‘Your hat is unlooped, Count:’ when, I am afraid, I looped it without thanking him.”

“Well, then, now to somewhat longer and more important conversations, my good young gentleman,” said La Reynie. “What has passed between you and the Chevalier de Rohan when you have met him since your arrival at the court?”

“Why, Sir,” replied the Count, with a grave and somewhat grieved air, “I give you my word that nothing passed between the Chevalier de Rohan and myself which at all affected his Majesty’s service, and I would fain, if it were possible, avoid entering into particulars which, if told to every body, might be painful to a gentleman of my acquaintance, who, I trust, may yet clear himself of any serious charge.”

“Monsieur le Comte de Morseiul,” said the Counsellor Ormesson, “we respect your motives, and have regard to the manner in which you have expressed them; but the Chevalier de Rohan, I am sorry to inform you, stands charged with high treason upon very strong presumptive evidence. There are particular circumstances which induce a belief that you may have had something to do with his

schemes. We trust that such is not the case; but it is absolutely necessary that you should clearly and explicitly state the nature of any transactions which may have taken place between you and him, both for your own safety, for his, and out of respect and duty to the King."

"Then, Sir, I have no other choice," replied the Count, "but to yield to your reasons, and to beg that you would put your questions in such a shape that I may answer them distinctly and easily."

"Very well, Monsieur de Morseiul," said La Reynie; "we have always heard that you are a gentleman of honour, who would not prevaricate even to save his own life. Pray inform us what was the nature of the conversation between you and the Chevalier de Rohan, on the morning of the 23d of this month."

"It was a very short one," replied the Count, somewhat surprised to see what accurate information of his proceedings had been obtained. "The Chevalier overtook me as I was going to Versailles, and on that occasion Monsieur de Rohan informed me that he had lost a large sum at the gaming table on the night before, and begged me to lend him a hundred louis, in

the hopes of recovering it by the same means. I advised him strongly to abstain from such proceedings, but of course did not refuse to lend him what he asked."

"Then did you lend him the hundred louis on the spot?" demanded La Reynie.

"No," replied the Count; "I told him that I had not such a sum with me, but promised to send it to him at his lodgings in the course of the afternoon, which I did as soon as ever I arrived at Versailles."

"Pray how happened it, Monsieur de Morseuil," demanded Ormesson, "that as you were going to Versailles, and the Chevalier overtook you going thither also; you did not ride on together, as would seem natural for two gentlemen like yourselves?"

"Nay," replied the Count, smiling, "that I think is pressing the matter rather too far, Monsieur. My society might not be pleasant to the Chevalier, or the reverse might be the case; or we might have other business by the way. A thousand circumstances of the same kind might occur."

"Well, then, I will put the question straightforwardly and at once," said Ormesson. "Had you, or had you not, any reason to believe that

the Chevalier de Rohan was at that time engaged in schemes dangerous to the state?"

"None in the world," replied the Count, "and no such feelings or ideas whatsoever had any share in preventing my riding on with the Chevalier de Rohan."

The Commissioners looked at each other for a moment with an inquiring glance, and then La Reynie placed before the Count a note which was to the following effect: —

"MY DEAR COUNT,

"I have received what you sent me, for which I return you many thanks, and I have not the slightest doubt, by your assistance, to be able to accomplish the purpose I have in view.

"Your devoted,

"THE CHEVALIER DE ROHAN."

"Pray, Monsieur de Morseiul," said the Counsellor, "do you recognise that note?"

"Most assuredly," replied the Count. "I received that note from the Chevalier de Rohan, on the very evening of the day we have just mentioned."

"And pray, what is the interpretation you put upon it?" demanded La Reynie.

“Simply,” replied the Count, “that he had received the hundred louis which I sent him, and hoped by employing them at the gaming-table to be enabled to win back the sum that he had lost.”

“It seems to me,” said the judge, “that the note will very well bear two interpretations, Count, and that supposing a gentleman unfortunate enough to have laid schemes for introducing a foreign enemy into the country, or for causing any of the provinces of the kingdom to revolt, and supposing him, at the same time, to be greatly straightened for money and assistance — it seems to me, I say, that the note before us is just such a one as he would write to a friend who had come to his aid at the moment of need, either by giving him aid of a pecuniary or of any other kind.”

“All I can say, Sir,” replied the Count, “is that the note before you I received from the Chevalier de Rohan, and that no other interpretation than the one I have given was, or could be, put upon it by me. I knew of no schemes whatsoever against the state, and the Chevalier himself had certainly no other meaning than the one I have assigned. It will be very easy for you, however, gentlemen, to place

the note before the Chevalier, and make him explain it himself. Though an unfortunate gentleman, he is still a gentleman of honour, and will tell you the truth. We have had no conversation together upon the subject. We have not even interchanged a word as we came hither, and you can compare his statement with mine."

"Perhaps that may have been done already, Monsieur de Morseiul," said Ormesson, "but at all events we think we may close your examination for to-day. The interrogation may be resumed at a future period, when other things have become manifest; and we have only, at present, to exhort you, on all occasions, to deal frankly and openly with the court."

"Such is always my custom to do, Sir," replied the Count. "I stand before you conscious of my innocence of any crime whatsoever, and, having nothing to conceal, am always ready to state frankly and truly what I know, except when by so doing I may wound or injure others."

Thus saying, he bowed to the Commissioners and retired. At the door of the chamber he found two musketeers waiting for his coming out, and, being placed between them, he was

once more conducted back to the Bastille by the same way he had come. He was then led by the turnkeys, who were in waiting to receive him, to the same apartment which he had previously occupied; but before nightfall, it was notified to him that the liberties of the Bastille were restored to him, and he received some slight solace by knowing that he should not, for some time at least, be confined to the solitary discomfort of his own apartment, with no occupation but to stride from one side to the other, or gazing out of the narrow window, endeavour to gain a sight of what was passing in the rue St. Antoine.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXECUTION.

WITHIN the walls of the Bastille, some weeks passed over almost without incident, but not without pain to the Count de Morseiul; but it would be tedious to detail all the feelings and the thoughts that crossed each other in his bosom during that period. He was still allowed a great degree of liberty, was permitted to take exercise in the great court, to converse with many of the other prisoners, and to hear whispers of what was taking place in the world without. But none of those whispers gave him any tidings of those he loved, any indication of his own probable fate, or any news of the church to which he belonged; and he remarked with pain, that while many of the other prisoners received visits from their friends and acquaintances, either no one sought to see him, or else those who did so were excluded by some express order.

He grieved over this, and perhaps felt, with

some degree of bitterness of spirit, that the iron of captivity might not only enter into the soul, but might wear and corrode the mind on which it pressed. Such feelings made him at once 'apply himself eagerly to every thing that could occupy his thoughts, and turn them from contemplations which he knew to be not only painful, but hurtful also; and he soon created for himself a number of those occupations which many an unhappy man besides himself has devised at different times for the solace of captivity.

The library, however, was his greatest enjoyment. Though so fond of all manly exercises, and famous for his skill therein, he had from his youth loved the communing with other minds, in the pages which the hand of genius has traced, and which have been given forth as the deliberate effort of the writer's spirit. He loved, I say, that communing with other men's hearts and minds which is undisturbed by discussion, or wordy dispute, or any of the petty vanities that creep into the living conversation even of the great, the learned, and the good; and now, though the library was small, and perhaps not very well selected, yet there was many a book therein which afforded him sweet

occupation during some, at least, of the melancholy hours of imprisonment.

At other times he walked the length of the court yard, gaining where he could a gleam of sunshine; and rather than suffer his thoughts, as he did so walk, to dwell upon the painful theme of his own fate, he would count the very stones of the pavement, and moralise upon their shapes and colours. Almost every day, during the period we have mentioned, the guard was turned out, the prisoners having their liberties were ordered to keep back, and a train of others in the stricter state of imprisonment were marched out to the arsenal. Amongst these was usually the unhappy Chevalier de Rohan; and the wistful, longing gaze with which one day he looked round the court as he passed through, seeming to envy the other prisoners the sort of liberty they enjoyed, caused the Count de Morseiul to task severely his own heart for the repinings which he felt at his own situation.

Various little occurrences of the same kind took place from time to time, affording a momentary matter of interest in the midst of the dark sameness of the prison life. At one period, during the whole of several nights, the Count de Morseiul heard at intervals voices which

seemed to be shouting through speaking trumpets. The place from which the sound proceeded varied constantly; and the young prisoner could only conclude that some friends of one of the sad inhabitants of the Bastille were prowling round it, endeavouring to communicate intelligence. He listened eagerly, in the supposition that those sounds might be addressed to him; but though from time to time he could catch a single word, such as "dead," "told," &c., he could make no continuous sense of what was said.

The first time this occurred was shortly after his examination before the commission, and it continued, for three or four nights, to be repeated at different hours; but still the sounds were too distant for him to ascertain the meaning of the speakers, and he was obliged to content himself with believing that this intelligence was not intended for himself, and hoping that it had been more distinct to the unfortunate person for whose ears it was designed.* After having

* The words were intended for the unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, and were " *Hatréaumont est mort, et n'a rien dit.*" The unhappy prisoner, like the Count de Morseuil, was not able to distinguish the meaning of his friends; otherwise those words, if he had shaped his course accordingly, would have insured his safety.

listened during the whole of one night, and the words not being repeated, he determined to ask one of his fellow-prisoners, who had the liberty like himself of walking in the court, whether he had heard it, and had been able to make out what was said.

The personage whom he fixed upon in his own mind for that purpose was a tall, upright, elderly man, with a soldier-like air, and a good deal of frankness of manner, approaching, perhaps, to what is called bluffness, without being in the slightest degree rude or uncivil. He seemed to seek nobody, but to converse willingly with any one when he was sought — gave his opinion in few words, but distinctly, accurately, and positively — bore his imprisonment with perfect lightness and indifference — never referred in the slightest degree to the cause thereof or to his own history, though without appearing to avoid the subject at all — and, in short, impressed strongly on the minds of those who saw him, and were accustomed to judge of the world, that he was a frank, upright, straight-forward soldier, accustomed to various kinds of endurance, and bearing all with manly firmness and resolution.

He spoke French with great fluency and ac-

curacy ; but at times, in conversing with him, the Count de Morseiul had fancied he could remark a foreign accent, though very slight, and he was inclined to believe that the old officer was one of the Weimerians who had served so long in the pay of France. His countenance, indeed, was not like that of a German ; there was more quickness and brightness of the eye, and the features were more elongated, and somewhat sharper than is common amongst the Teutonic races. But still a great part of the Weimerian troops had been levied on the borders of the Rhine, where the mixture of French and other blood often makes itself strongly to be remarked amongst the German population. His ordinary walk was from one corner of the court-yard to the opposite angle, which gave the utmost extent of space that could be had ; and there the young Count, on descending the staircase, found him walking up and down with his usual quick pace and erect carriage. Though the old man neither paused nor noticed him further than by a passing "Good morning, Sir," the Count joined him, and at once spoke of the matter in question.

"Have you heard," he said, "during this last night or two, some people shouting, ap-

parently through speaking trumpets, as if they wished to convey intelligence to one of us prisoners?"

"Once or twice very faintly," replied the other. "But I am on the opposite side of the prison to you, you know, and the sounds I heard seemed to come from your side; or, at all events, not further round than the Well Tower. Do you think they were addressed to you?"

"I think not," replied the Count; "and if they were, I certainly could make nothing of them. I looked out of my window to get a sight as far as possible of the speakers by the moonlight the other night, but I was not successful; for I can see, as I am placed, into the little Place St. Antoine, but no further. However, I tried to distinguish the voices, and certainly they were not those of any one I know."

"A speaking trumpet makes a great difference," replied his companion. "I should have liked to have heard them more distinctly."

"Do you think they were intended for you?" said the Count.

"Oh dear no," replied the other; "nobody can have any thing to tell me. If ever my liberty comes, it will come at once; and as to

either trying me or punishing me in any other way than by imprisonment, that they dare not do."

"That is in some degree a happy situation," said the Count. "But I scarcely know how that can be, for judging by my own case, and that of many others, I have no slight reason to believe that they dare try or punish any man in France, whether guilty or not."

"Any Frenchman you mean, Count," replied the stranger; "but that does not happen to be my case; and though my own King may be rascal and fool enough to let me stay here wearing out the last days of a life, the greater part of which has been devoted to the service of himself and his ungrateful ancestors, yet I do not believe that he dare for his life suffer me to be publicly injured. A trial would, as a matter of course, be known sooner or later. They may poison me, perhaps," he continued, "to keep me quiet, though I do not think it either. Your King is not so bad as that, though he is a great tyrant; but he is not bloody by his nature. However, Monsieur de Morseiul, as I am not in here for any crime, as I never had any thing to do with a conspiracy of any kind, as I am not a native of this country, or

a subject of your King, as I have not a secret in the world, and little more money than will serve to feed and clothe me, I do not see that any one can have either object or interest in hallooing at me through a speaking trumpet."

"You have excited my curiosity," said the Count, "and a Frenchman's curiosity, you know, is always somewhat intrusive; but as you have just said that you have not a secret in the world, it will seem less impertinent than it otherwise would be if I ask what, in the name of fortune, you can be here for?"

"Not in the least impertinent," replied the other. "I am in here for something of the same kind that they tell me you are in here for: namely, for differing from the King of France in regard to transubstantiation; for thinking that he'll go to the devil at once when he dies, without stopping half-way at a posthouse, called Purgatory, which a set of scoundrels have established for their own particular convenience; and for judging it a great deal better that people should sing psalms, and say their prayers, in a language that they understand, than in a tongue they know not a word of. I mean, in short, for being a Protestant; for if it had not been for that, I should not have been in here.

The fact was, I served long in this country in former times, and having taken it into my head to see it again, and to visit some old friends, I undertook a commission to bring back a couple of brats of a poor cousin of mine, who had been left here for their education. Louis found out what I was about, declared that I came to make Protestant converts, and shut me up in the Bastille, where I have been now nearly nine months. I sent a message over to the King of England by a fellow-prisoner who was set at liberty some time ago. But every one knows that Charles would have sold his own soul by the pound, and thrown his father and mother, and all his family, into the scale, for the sake of a few crowns, at any time. This Popish rascal, too, who is now on the throne, doubtless thinks that I am just as well where I am, so I calculate upon whistling away my days within the four walls of this court.—I don't care, it can't last very long. I was sixty-five on the third of last month, and though there feels some life in these old limbs, the days of Mathuselah, thank God, are gone by, and we've no more kicking about now for a thousand years. I shouldn't wonder," he continued, "if the people you heard were hallooing to that unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, whom they dragged

through this morning to be interrogated again. They say he'll have his head chopped off to a certainty. If we could have found out what the people said we might have told him, for prisoners will get at each other let them do what they like."

"I listened for one whole night," said the Count, "but found it quite in vain. The judges I suppose are satisfied that I had nothing to do with this business of the Chevalier de Rohan's, otherwise they would have had me up again for examination."

"God knows," replied his companion. "Tyranny is like an actor at a country fair, and one never knows which way he will kick next."

Thus passed the conversation between the Count and the old English officer, whose name, somewhat disfigured indeed, may be found written in the registers of the Bastille as arrested on suspicion; for which crime he, like many others, was subjected to imprisonment for a lengthened period. He and the Count de Morseiul now usually took their walk together, and in his society the young nobleman found no small delight, for there was a sort of quaint indifference which gave salt and flavour to considerable good sense and originality of thought. The

old man himself seemed to take a pleasure in conversing with the young Count; which was evidently not the case with the generality of his fellow-prisoners. One morning, however, towards the end of the period we have mentioned, the sound of the falling drawbridge was heard, the soldiers drew up in double line, the order for all the other prisoners to fall back was given, and the Chevalier de Rohan, followed by two or three other prisoners, amongst whom were Vandenenden and a lady, were brought in as if from examination.

The countenances of almost all were very pale, with the exception of that of the Chevalier de Rohan, which was inflamed, with a fiery spot on either cheek, while his eyes flashed fire, and his lips were absolutely covered with foam. Four times between the great gate of the court and the tower in which he was confined, he halted abruptly, and turning round with furious gestures to the guards and gaolers who surrounded him, poured forth a torrent of fierce and angry words, exclaiming that he had been deceived, cheated, that the King's name had been used to assure him of safety, and that now the King had retracted the promises and was going to murder him.

It was in vain that the guards tried to stop him, and endeavoured to force him onward. Still he turned round as soon as ever he had an opportunity, and shouted forth the same accusation with horrible imprecations and even blasphemies. The second prisoner, who seemed to be a military man, paused and regarded the Chevalier with a stern and somewhat scornful air, but the lady and the old man, Vandenenden, were drowned in tears, and from all the Count saw he concluded that the trial of the Chevalier and his accomplices had either terminated in their condemnation, or else had taken such a turn as showed that result to be inevitable.

From that time none of the prisoners who had the liberties of the Bastille were allowed to remain in the court when the Chevalier and his accomplices passed through it, an order being given before the gates were opened, for every one to retire to his own apartments. Three days after this new regulation, such an order having been given, the Count obeyed it willingly, for the weather had become cold and damp, and the court of the Bastille felt like a well. He had obtained permission to take some books out of the library, in which there was no fire allowed, and sitting

by the embers in his own apartment, he was endeavouring to amuse himself by reading, when the sounds of what seemed to him carts, in greater numbers than usual, mingled with the tongues of many persons speaking, called him to the little window of his chamber.

He saw that the small Place St. Antoine was filled with a crowd of people surrounding two or three large carts as they seemed, but he could not make out what the persons present were about, and, after looking on for a few minutes, he returned to his book.

Every thing within the walls of the Bastille seemed to be unusually still and quiet, and for rather more than an hour and a half he read on, till some sound of a peculiar character, or some sudden impression on his own mind which he could not account for, made him again rise and hasten to the window. When he did so, a sight was presented to his eyes which would have required long years to efface its recollection. The carts which he had seen, and the materials they contained, had been by this time erected into a scaffold; and in the front thereof, turned towards the Rue St. Antoine, which, as well as the square itself, was filled with an immense multitude of people,

was a block with the axe leaning against the side.

At one corner of the scaffold was erected a gibbet, and in the front, within a foot or two of the block, stood the unfortunate Chevalier de Rohan, with a priest, on one side of him, pouring consolation or instruction into his ear, while the executioner, on the other side, was busily cutting off his hair to prepare his neck for the stroke. Two or three other prisoners were behind with several priests and the assistants of the executioner, and amongst them again was seen the form of the old man, Vandenenden, and of the lady whom the Count had beheld pass through the court of the castle.

The old man seemed scarcely able to support himself, and was upheld near the foot of the gallows by two of the guards; but the lady, with her head uncovered and her fine hair gathered together in a knot near the top of her head, stood alone, calm, and, to all appearance, perfectly self-possessed; and as she turned, for a moment, to look at the weak old man, whose writhing agitation at parting with a life that he could not expect to prolong for many years even if pardoned was truly lamentable, she showed the Count de Morseiul a fine though somewhat

faded countenance, with every line expressive of perfect resolution and tranquillity.

The Count de Morseiul was a brave man, who had confronted death a thousand times, who had seen it in many an awful shape and accompanied by many a terrible accessory; but when he looked at the upturned faces of the multitude, the block, the axe, the gibbet, the executioners, the cold grey sky above that spoke of hopelessness, the thronged windows all around teeming with gaping faces, and all the horrible parade of public execution, he could not but wonder at the self-possession and the calmness of that lady's look and demeanour, as one about to suffer in that awful scene.

His, however, was no heart that could delight in such spectacles, and withdrawing almost immediately from the window, he waited in deep thought. In about a minute after there was a sort of low murmur, followed by a heavy stroke; and then the murmur sounded like the rushing of a distant wind. In a few moments after that, again came another blow, and the Count thought that there was a suppressed scream, mingled with the wave-like sound of the multitude. Again came that harsh blow, accompanied by a

similar noise, and, lastly, a loud shout, in which there were mingled tones of ferocity and derision, very different from any which had been heard before. Not aware of what could have produced the change, the Count was once more irresistibly led to the window, where he beheld swinging and writhing on the gibbet, the form of the old man Vandenenden, whose pusillanimity seemed to have excited the contempt and indignation of the populace. On the other parts of the scaffold the executioner and his assistants were seen gathering up the bloody ruins of the human temples they had overthrown. Sickened and pained, the Count turned away, and covered his eyes with his hands, asking himself in the low voice of thought, "When will this be my fate also?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOMAN'S JUDGMENT.

WE must now, for a little, change the scene entirely; and, as we find often done most naturally, both in reality and poetry, bring the prison and the palace side by side. It was in one of the smaller chambers, then, of the palace at Versailles—exquisitely fitted up with furniture of the most costly, if not of the most splendid materials, with very great taste shown in every thing, grace in all the ornaments, harmony in all the colours, and a certain degree of justness and appropriateness in every object around—that there sat a lady, late on the evening of an autumnal day, busily reading from a book, illustrated with some of the richest and most beautiful miniatures that the artists of the French capital could then produce.

She was, at the time we speak, of somewhat past the middle age,—that is to say, she was nearly approaching to the age of fifty, but she looked considerably younger than she really was, and forty was the very extreme

at which any one by the mere look would have ventured to place the number of her years. The rich worked candelabra of gold under which she was reading cast its light upon not a single grey hair. The form was full and rounded; the arms white and delicate; the hand, which in general loses its symmetry sooner than aught else, except, perhaps, the lips, was as tapering, as soft, and as beautiful in contour as ever. The eyes were large and expressive, and there was a thoughtfulness about the whole countenance which had nothing of melancholy in its character, perhaps a little of worldliness, but more of mind and intellect than either.

After she had been reading for some time, the door was quietly opened, and the King himself entered with a soft and almost noiseless step. The lady immediately laid down her book and rose, but the King took her by the hand, led her back to her chair, and seated himself beside her.

“ Still busy, reading,” he said.

“ I am anxious to do so, your Majesty,” she answered, “ at every moment that I can possibly command. In the sort of life which I am destined to lead, and in your Majesty’s splendid court, temptations to forget what is right, and to think of nothing but pleasures and enjoy-

ments, are so manifold, that one has need to have recourse to such calmer counsellors as these," and she laid her hand upon the book, "counsellors who are not disturbed by such seductions, and whose words have with them a portion of the tranquillity of the dead."

The words were of a soberer character than Louis had been accustomed to hear from the lips of woman during the greater part of his life, but still they did not displease him, and he replied only by saying, —

"But we must have a few more living counsels at present, Madame, for the fate of Louis——"

"Which is the fate of France," she said in so low a voice that it could scarcely be termed an interruption.

"For the fate of Louis and of his domestic happiness—a word, alas, which is so little known to kings—is even now in the balance. Madame," he continued, taking that fair hand in his, "Madame, it is scarcely necessary at this hour to tell you that I love you; it is scarcely necessary to speak what are the wishes and the hopes of the King; scarcely necessary to say what would be his conduct were not motives, strong and almost overpowering, opposed to all that he most desires."

Madame de Maintenon, for she it was, had risen from her seat ; had withdrawn her hand from that of the King, and for a moment pressed both her hands tightly upon her heart, while her countenance, which had become as pale as death, spoke that the emotion which she felt was real.

“Cease, Sire ; oh, cease,” she exclaimed, “if you would not have me drop at your feet ! Indeed,” she continued more vehemently, “that is my proper place,” and she cast herself at once upon her knees before the King, taking the hand from which she had just disengaged her own, to bend her lips over it with a look of reverence and affection.

“Hear me, Sire, hear me,” she said, as the King endeavoured to raise her, “hear me even as I am ; for notwithstanding the deep and sincere love and veneration which are in my heart, I must yet offend in one person the monarch whom every voice in Europe proclaims the greatest in the earth ; the man whom my own heart tells me is the most worthy to be loved. There is one, however, Sire, who must be loved and venerated first, and beyond all — I mean the Almighty ; and from his law, and from his commands, nothing on earth shall ever induce me to swerve.

Now, for more than a year, such has been my constant reply to your Majesty on these occasions. I have besought you, I have entreated you never to speak on such subjects again, unless that were possible which I know to be impossible."

"Nay," replied the Monarch, interrupting her, and raising her with a little gentle force, "nay, nothing is impossible, but for me to see you kneeling there."

"Oh yes, indeed, indeed, it is, your Majesty!" she said; "I have long known it, I have long been sure of it. You once condescended to dream of it yourself; you mentioned it to me, and I for a single instant was deceived by hope; but as soon as I came to examine it, I became convinced, fully convinced, that such a thing was utterly and entirely impossible, that your Majesty should descend from your high station, and that you should oppose and over-rule the advice and opinion of courtiers and ministers, who, though perhaps a little touched with jealousy, can easily find sound and rational reasons enough to oppose your will in this instance. Oh, no, no, Sire, I know it is impossible; for Heaven's sake do not agitate me by a dream of happiness that can never be realised!"

“ So little is it impossible, dear friend,” replied the King, “ that it is scarcely half an hour ago since I spoke with Louvois upon the subject.”

“ And what did he say ?” exclaimed Madame de Maintenon, with an eagerness that she could not master. “ He opposed it, of course — and doubtless wisely. But oh, Sire, you must grant me a favour : the last of many, but still a very great one. You must let me retire from your court, from this place of cruel and terrible temptation, where they look upon me, from the favour which your Majesty has been pleased to show me, in a light which I dare not name. No, Sire, no, I will never have it said, that I lived on at your court knowing that I bore the name of your concubine. However false, the imputation is too terrible to be undergone — I, who have ever raised my voice against such acts, I, who have risked offending your Majesty by remonstrances and exhortations. No, Sire, no ! I cannot, indeed I cannot, undergo it any longer. It is terrible to me, it is injurious to your Majesty, who has so nobly triumphed over yourself in another instance. It matters not what Monsieur de Louvois has said, though I trust he said nothing on earth to lead you to be-

lieve that I am capable of yielding to unlawful love."

"Oh no," replied the King, "his opposition was but to the marriage, and that as usual was rude, gross, and insulting to his King. I wonder that I have patience with him. But it will some day soon give way."

"I hope and trust, Sire," cried Madame de Maintenon, clasping her hands earnestly, "I hope and trust that your Majesty has not suffered insult on my account. Then, indeed, it were high time that I should go."

"No," replied Louis, "not absolute insult. Louvois means but to act well. He said every thing in opposition, I acknowledge, coarsely and rudely, and in the end he cast himself upon his knees before me, unsheathed his sword, and, offering the hilt, besought me to take his life, rather than to do what I contemplated."

"He did!" cried Madame de Maintenon, with a bright red spot in either cheek. "He did! The famous minister of Louis XIV. has been studying at the theatre lately I know! But still, Sire, though doubtless he was right in some part of his view, Françoise d'Aubigné is not quite so lowly as to be an object of scorn

to the son of Michael le Tellier, whose ancestors I believe sold drugs at Rheims, while my grandfather supported the throne of yours with his sword, his blood, and his wisdom. He might have spared his scorn, methinks, and saved his wit for argument. But I must not speak so freely in my own cause, for that it is my own, I acknowledge," and she wiped away some tears from her fine eyes. "It is my own, for when I beseech your Majesty to let me leave you, I tear my own heart, I trample upon all my own feelings. But oh, believe me, Sire," she continued ardently, "believe me when I say, that I would rather that heart were broken, as it soon will be, than that your Majesty should do any thing derogatory to your crown and dignity, or I must add, than I would do myself any thing in violation of the precepts of virtue and religion."

She wept a good deal; but she wept gracefully, and hers was one of those faces which looked none the worse for tears. The King gently drew her to her seat, for she had still been standing; saying, "Nay, nay, be comforted. You have yet the King. You think not really then," he said, "really and sincerely you think not, that there is any true degra-

dation in a monarch wedding a subject? I ask you yourself, I ask you to speak candidly !”

“Nay, Sire,” cried Madame de Maintenon, “how can you ask me, deeply interested as I am — how can you ask any woman? For we all feel alike in such things, and differently from you men. There is not one woman, proud or humble in your Majesty’s court, that would not give you the same answer, if she spoke sincerely.”

“Indeed !” exclaimed the King; “then we men must be certainly in the wrong. But what think you,” he continued, “what think you, as a proof — what would yon fair girl Clémence de Marly say, were we to ask her? I saw her but now, as I passed, reading with the Dauphine in somewhat melancholy guise.”

“Well may she be melancholy, Sire !” replied the lady, somewhat sadly, “when the King hears not her prayers. But methinks it would be hardly fair to make her a judge.”

“Why, why?” demanded Louis quickly; “because she is so proud and haughty? — Remember, you said the proudest in our court.”

“So I say still, Sire,” replied Madame de Maintenon in a gentle tone; “but I do not think her proud. She would be too favourable

a judge; that was my sole objection. Her own station in the court is doubtful; and besides, Sire, you could not think of submitting that, on which none — no, not the wisest minister you have — can judge so well as yourself, to the decision of a girl.”

“Fear not,” replied the King; “I will but take her voice on the matter, without her knowing aught of that on which her opinion is called for. I would fain hear what a young and unpractised tongue would say. Let her be called in.”

Madame de Maintenon hesitated for a moment. The risk seemed great; the object of long years was at stake; and her own fate, and that of France, might depend upon the words of a wild, proud girl. But she saw no means of avoiding the trial; and she rang the bell: even in the very act of doing so, remembering many a trait of Clémence, both in childhood and youth, which gave her some assurance. A page appeared instantly, and was despatched to the apartments of the Dauphine to call Mademoiselle de Marly to the presence of the King.

The feet of Clémence bore her thither like light, though her heart beat wildly with fear and agitation; and the hue of her cheek, once so

bright and glowing, was now as pale as death. She was glad, however, to find the King and Madame de Maintenon alone, for she had succeeded in interesting the latter in the fate of the Count de Morseiul, and she doubted not that she would exert herself, as much as she dared to do for any one, to persuade the King to deal with him gently. So many long and weary days had passed, however, with but little progress, that she had well nigh sunk into despair, when the summons of this night made her suppose that her fate, and that of her lover, was upon the eve of being decided.

The page who conducted her closed the door as soon as she had entered, and Clémence stood before the King with feelings of awe and agitation, such as in former days she knew not that she could feel towards the greatest potentate on earth: but Clémence de Marly loved, and her whole feelings had been changed.

Not a little was her surprise, however, when the King addressed her in a tone half playful, half serious, —

“Come hither, spoiled beauty,” he said, “come hither: and sit down upon that stool — or, in truth, I should give you up this chair, for you are going to act a part that you

never performed before — that of judge, and in a matter of taste, too.”

Clémence put her hand to her brow, as if to clear away the thoughts with which she had come thither. But, after gazing in the King’s face for a moment with a bewildered look, she recovered herself, and replied, —

“ Indeed, Sire, I am, of all people, the most unfit; but I will do my best to please your Majesty. What may be the question? ”

“ Why,” answered the King, smiling at her evident surprise and embarrassment, the real cause of which he had quite forgotten in his own thoughts and feelings, “ why the matter is this; a new play has been submitted to us for approval by one of our best poets. It turns upon an ancient king becoming in love with one of his own subjects, and marrying her while his ministers wish him to marry a neighbouring queen. The question of the policy, however, is not the thing. We have settled all that, but the point in dispute between me and this fair lady is, whether the poet would have done better to have made the heroine turn out, after all, to be some princess unknown. I say not; but our sweet friend, whose opinion, perhaps, is better than my own, contends that

it would have been better, in order to preserve the king's dignity."

Madame de Maintenon panted for breath, and grasped the book that lay on the table to prevent herself from betraying her agitation ; but she dared not say a word, nor even look up.

She was almost instantly relieved, however, for Clémence exclaimed, almost before the King had done speaking, — " Oh, no ! oh, no ! Dear lady, you are wrong, believe me. Kings lose their dignity only by evil acts ; they rise in transcendent majesty when they tread upon base prejudices. I know nothing of the policy ; you tell me that is apart ; and the only question is whether she was worthy that he chose. Was she, Sire — was she noble and good ? "

" Most noble, and most excellent ! " said the King.

" Was she religious, wise, well educated ? " continued Clémence, eagerly.

" She was all ! " answered Louis, " all in a most eminent degree."

" Was she in knowledge, demeanour, character, worthy of his love and of himself ? " asked the enthusiastic girl, with her whole face glowing.

" In demeanour not inferior, in character

equal, in knowledge superior—in all respects worthy!” replied the Monarch, catching her enthusiasm.

But he was stopped by the agitated sobs of Madame de Maintenon, who, sinking from her chair at his feet, clasped his knees, exclaiming, “Spare me, Sire! Spare me, or I shall die!”

The King gazed at her tenderly for a moment, then bent down his head, kissed her cheek, and, whispering a few brief words, placed her in the chair where he himself had been sitting. He then turned to Clémence de Marly, who stood by, astonished at the agitation that her words had produced, and fearful that the consequences might be the destruction of all her own hopes.

The countenance of Louis, as he turned towards her, somewhat re-assured her; but still she could not help exclaiming with no slight anxiety, “I hope, Sire, I have not offended. I fear I have done so unintentionally.”

“If you have,” said the King, smiling upon her graciously, “we will find a punishment for you; and as we have made you act as a judge where you little perhaps expected it, we will now make you a witness of things that you expected

still less, but which your lips must never divulge till you are authorised to do so. Go as fast as possible to my oratory close by the little cabinet of audience, there you will find good Monsieur la Chaise: direct him to ring the bell, and — after having told Bontems to summon Monsieur de Montchevreuil and the Archbishop, who is still here, I think — to come hither himself as speedily as possible. You will accompany him.”

What were the King's intentions Clémence de Marly scarcely could divine; but seeing that her words had evidently given happiness both to the King and to Madame de Maintenon, and judging from that fact that her own best hopes for the deliverance of him she loved might be on the eve of accomplishment, she flew rather than ran to obey the King's directions. She found the King's confessor, La Chaise, waiting, evidently for the return of the King, with some impatience. The message which she brought him seemed to excite his astonishment greatly; but after pausing for a moment to consider what kind of event that message might indicate, the old man clasped his hands, exclaiming, “This is God's work, the King's salvation is now secure.”

He then did as he had been directed, rang the bell for Bontems, gave the order as he had received it, and hurried after Clémence along the corridor of the palace. At the door of Madame de Maintenon's apartment the young lady paused, for there were voices speaking eagerly within, and she feared to intrude upon the monarch. His commands to return, however, had been distinct, and she consequently opened the door and entered. Madame de Maintenon was standing by the table with her eyes bent down, and her colour much heightened. The King was also standing, and with a slight frown upon his countenance was regarding a person who had been added to the party since Clémence had left it. This was no other than the minister Louvois, whose coarse harsh features seemed filled with sullen mortification, which even the presence of the King could scarcely restrain from breaking forth in angry words. His eyes were bent down, not in humility but in stubbornness, his shoulders a little raised, and he was muttering rather than speaking when Clémence entered. The only words, however, that were audible were, "Your Majesty's will must be a law to yourself as well as to your people. I have ventured in all sincerity

to express my opinion, and have nothing more to say."

The opening of the door caused Madame de Maintenon to raise her eyes, and when she saw Clémence and the confessor a glad and relieved smile played over her countenance, which was greatly increased by the words which the confessor addressed to the King immediately on his entrance.

"Sire," he said, without waiting for Louis to speak, "from what I have heard, and from what I see, I believe — nay, I am sure, that your Majesty is about to take a step which will, more than any that I know of, tend to insure your eternal salvation. Am I not right?" and he extended his hand towards Madame de Maintenon, as if that gesture were quite sufficient to indicate his full meaning.

"You are, my good father," replied the King; "and I am happy to find that so wise and so good a man as yourself approves of what I am doing. Monsieur Louvois here still seems discontented, though I have conceded so much to his views of policy as to promise that this marriage shall remain for ever private."

"What are views of policy," cried Père la

Chaise, "to your Majesty's eternal salvation? There are greater, there are higher considerations than worldly policy, Sire; but even were worldly policy all, I should differ with Monsieur Louvois, and say that you were acting as wisely in the things of this world as in reference to another."

"God knows, and this lady knows," said Louvois, "that my only opposition proceeds from views of policy. For herself, personally," he added, feeling that he might have offended one who was more powerful than even himself, "for herself, personally, she well knows that I have the most deep and profound respect; and, since it is to be, I trust that his Majesty will allow me to be one of the witnesses."

"Assuredly," replied the King. "I had so determined in my own mind, Monsieur de Louvois; and as we need not have more than three, we will dispense with this young lady's presence. Oh, here comes the Archbishop and Montchevreuil; my good father La Chaise, let me beg you to prepare an altar, even here. I have determined that all doubt and discussion upon this subject shall be over to-night. Explain, I beg you, to Monsieur de Harlay what are my views and intentions. One word, belle

Clémence," he added, advancing to Clémence, and speaking to her with a gracious smile, "we shall not need your presence, fair lady," but you shall not want the bridemaids' presents. Come hither to-morrow half an hour before I go to the council; and as you have judged well and wisely in this cause to-night, we will endeavour to judge leniently on any cause that you may bring before us to-morrow."

Although the King spoke low, his words did not escape the keen ear of Louvois; and when Clémence raised her eyes to reply, they met those of the minister gazing upon her with a look of fiend-like anger, which seemed to imply, "You have triumphed over me for the time, and have thwarted me in a matter of deep moment. You think at the same time you have gained your own private end, but I will disappoint you."

Such at least was the interpretation that Clémence put upon that angry glance. For an instant it made her heart sink, but, recollecting her former courage the next instant, she replied boldly to the King, "My trust is always in your Majesty alone. I have ever had that trust; and what I have seen to-night would show me clearly, that let us expect what we may

of your Majesty's magnanimity and generosity no disappointment will await us."

Thus saying she retired; and what farther passed in the chamber that she quitted — though it affected the destinies of Louis, and of France, and of Europe, more than any event which had taken place for years — remains in the records of history amongst those things which are known though not proved, and are never doubted even though no evidence of their reality exists.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE.

THE hope delayed, which maketh the heart sick, had its wearing effect upon the Count de Morseiul. His countenance showed it in every line; the florid hue of strong health was beginning to pass away; and one morning, in taking his usual walk up and down the court of the Bastille in company with the bluff old English officer we have mentioned, his companion, after gazing in his face for a moment, as if something therein had suddenly struck him, said, "You look ill, young gentleman; what is the matter?"

"How is it possible that I can be otherwise," said the Count, "confined as I am here, and lingering on from day to day, without any knowledge of what is passing regarding myself, or of the fate of friends that I love, or of the condition of all those in whose happiness I am interested?"

"Poo! you must bear things more lightly," answered the old soldier. "Why here, you, a

youth, a mere boy, have plenty of time before you to spare a year or two for imprisonment. Think of what a difference there is between you and me: here am I without a day too much to spare in life; while to you neither months nor years are any thing. As to your friends without, too, trouble not your brain about them. The world would go on just as well without you and I, if we were put out of it to-morrow; friends would find new friends, sweethearts gain new lovers, servants betake them to new masters, and the roses would grow, and the birds would sing, and love, and war, and policy, and the wind of heaven, would have their course as if nothing had happened. There might be a few drops in some eyes which would fall like a spring shower, and be dried up again as soon. However," he added, seeing that his philosophy was not very much to the taste of the young Count, "you must live in the world as long as I have done ere you can take such hard lessons home; and if it be but communication with your friends without that you want, I should think that might be obtained easily."

"I see not how that is to be done," replied the Count. "If they had allowed me to have my valet here there would have been no dif-

ficulty, for I do not think that even stone walls would keep in his wit."

"Oh, we can do without him, I dare say," replied the old man. "If you write me down a note, containing few words, and no treason, doubtless I can find means, perhaps this very day, of sending it forth to any one that you will. In my apartment we shall find paper, which I got not long ago; some sort of ink we will easily manufacture for ourselves. So, come: that will revive hope a little for you; and though I cannot promise you an answer, yet perhaps one may be obtained too. There are old friends of mine that sometimes will drop in to see me; and what I propose to do, is to give your note to one of the prisoners I have spoken with, who expects to be liberated to-day or to-morrow, and direct the answer to be sent by some one who is likely to come to see me."

The young Count gladly availed himself of this proposal; and the means of writing having, by one prison resource or another, been obtained, he wrote a few brief words, detailing the anxiety and pain he suffered, and begging some immediate information as to the probability of his obtaining his freedom, and regarding the situation of those that he loved best. He couched

his meaning in language as vague as possible, and addressed the note to his valet, Jerome Riquet, fearing to write to Clémence, lest he should by any means draw suspicion and consequent evil upon her. The old English officer undertook to give all the necessary directions for its delivery, and when they met again in the evening, he assured him that the note was gone.

At an early hour on the following morning the Englishman was called away from him to speak with some one admitted by an order from the minister; and in about ten minutes after he joined the Count, and slipped a small piece of folded paper into his hand, saying, in a low voice, "Do not look at it now, or leave me immediately, for there are several of these turn-keys about, and we must not create suspicion." After a few more turns, however, the old man said, "Now, Monsieur de Morseiul," and the Count hastening to his chamber, opened the note which was in the handwriting of Riquet.

"I have been obliged," it said, "to keep out of the way, and to change my shape a dozen times, on account of the business of the Exempt; but — from what the Count says, and from hearing that Monsieur de Louvois swore last night by all the gods that he worships, that, on ac-

count of some offence just given, he will bring the Count's head to the block within a week, as he did that of Monsieur de Rohan — a bold stroke will be struck to-day. The Count will be set at liberty about two o'clock, and the moment he is at liberty he must neither go to King nor ministers, nor to his own house, either in Paris or at Versailles, but to the little inn called the Golden Cock, in the Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine, call himself Monsieur du Sac, and ask for the horse his servant brought. Having got it, let him ride on for Poitou as fast as he can go. He will meet friends by the way."

This was all that the note contained, and what was the bold stroke that Riquet alluded to the Count could not divine. He judged, indeed, that perhaps it was quite as well he should be ignorant of the facts; and after having impressed all the directions contained in the note upon his mind, he destroyed the paper, and was preparing to go down again into the court.

It so happened, however, that he paused for a moment, and took up one of the books which he was still reading, when an officer, who was called the Major of the Bastille, entered the room, and summoned him to the presence of the go-

vernor. The Count immediately followed, and passing through the gate into the Court of Government, he found Besmaux waiting in the corps de garde, with a blithe and smiling countenance.

“ Good morning, Monsieur de Morseiul,” he said; “ I have got some good news for you, which perhaps you do not expect.”

He fixed his eyes scrutinisingly upon the Count’s face, but all was calm. “ Here is an order for your liberation,” he continued, “ which, doubtless, you will be glad to hear.”

“ Most glad,” exclaimed the Count; “ for, to say the truth, I am growing both sick and weary of this imprisonment, especially as I know that I have done nothing to deserve it.”

“ That is better than being imprisoned knowing you have done something to deserve it,” said Besmaux. “ However, here is the order; and though it is not exactly in accurate form, I must obey, I suppose, and set you at liberty, for here is the King’s handwriting in every line.”

“ That you must judge of yourself, Monsieur de Besmaux,” replied the Count. “ But I hope, of course, that you will not detain me any longer than is necessary.”

“ No, no,” said Besmaux; “ I must obey the

order, for it is in the King's hand distinctly. Here are all the things that were upon your person, Monsieur de Morseuil. Be so good as to break the seal yourself, examine them, and give me an acknowledgment—as is usual here—that they have been returned to you. There is the ordinary form; you have nothing to do but to sign it.”

The Count did as he was required to do, and the governor then restored to him his sword, saying, “There is your sword, Monsieur le Comte. It is customary to give some little acknowledgment to the turnkeys if you think fit; and now, Monsieur le Comte, you are free. Will you do me the honour of supping with me again to-night?”

“I fear not to-night, Monsieur de Besmaux; some other time I will have that pleasure. But, of course, after this unexpected and sudden enlargement, there is much to be done.”

“Of course,” replied the governor; “you will have to thank the King, and Monsieur de Louvois, and all that. Some other time then be it. It is strange they have sent no carriage or horse for you. Perhaps you would like to wait till they arrive?”

“Oh, no,” replied the Count. “Freedom

before every thing, Monsieur de Besmaux. By your permission I will send for the apparel I have left in my chamber. But now, to set my foot beyond the drawbridge is my great ambition."

"We will conduct you so far," replied Besmaux, and led the way towards the gate. The drawbridge was lowered, the gates opened, and the Count, distributing the greater part of the money which had been restored to him amongst the turnkeys, turned and took leave of the governor, and issued forth from the Bastille. He remarked, however, that Besmaux, with the major of the prison, and two or three others, remained upon the bridge, as if they felt some suspicion, and were watching his farther proceedings. He, accordingly, rendered his pace somewhat slow, and turned towards his own hotel in Paris, while two or three boys, who hung about the gates of the Bastille, followed, importunately looking up in his face. He passed along two streets before he could get rid of them, but then, suddenly turning up one of the narrow lanes of the city, he made the best of his way to the little inn, or rather public house, which Jerome Riquet had pointed out to him in his letter, where a bright golden cock,

somewhat larger than life, stood out into the street from a pole thrust into the front of the house. Before he turned in he looked down the street towards the Bastille, but saw no cause for suspicion, and entered the narrow entrance. As was not uncommon in such houses at that time, no door on either hand gave admission to the rooms of the inn till the visiter had threaded half way through the small ill-lighted passage. At length, however, doors appeared, and the sound of a footstep instantly called out a stout, jovial-looking personage, with a considerable nose and abundance of cheek and stomach, who, without saying any thing, merely planted himself directly in the Count's way.

"Are you the landlord?" demanded the Count.

"Yes, Sir," replied the cabaretier, much more laconically than might have been expected from his appearance. "Who are you?"

"I am Monsieur du Sac," replied the Count.

"Oh, oh!" cried the host, laying his forefinger on the side of his face. "If you are Monsieur du Sac, your horse will be ready in a crack. But you had better come into the stable; there are people drinking in the hall."

The Count followed him without saying any

more, and found three horses standing ready saddled, and wanting only the girths tightened, and the bridles in their mouths. The centre one he instantly recognised as one of his own finest horses, famous for its great strength and courage. The other two were powerful animals, but of a different breed ; and the Count was somewhat surprised when the landlord ordered a stable boy, who was found waiting, to make haste and girth them all up. The boy began with the farther horse ; but the landlord then exclaimed, “ No, no, the gentleman’s first, the others will do after ;” and in a moment the Count’s horse was ready to set out.

“ Better go by the back gate, Sir,” said the host ; “ then if you follow round by the gardens of the convent of St. Mary, up the little lane to the left, you will come into the road again, where all is clear. Where’s the bottle, boy, I told you to have ready ? Monsieur du Sac will want a draught before he goes.” A large bottle was instantly produced from a nook in the stable, and a tumbler full of excellent wine poured out. The Count took it, and drank, for excitement had made him thirsty, and he might well want that support, which the juice of the grape or any other thing could afford, when he

reflected that the die was now cast; that he had been liberated from prison, as he could not doubt by some counterfeit order; and that he was flying from the court of France, certainly never to return, unless it were as a captive brought back probably to death.

The blow being struck, however, he was not a man to feel regret or hesitation, and there was something in the sensation of being at liberty, of having cast off the dark load of imprisonment, which was in itself inspiring. He sprang upon his horse then with joyful speed, cast the landlord one of the few gold pieces that remained in his purse, and while the boy held open the back gates of the inn court, he rode out once more free to turn his steps whithersoever he would. That part of the city was not unknown to him, and passing round the gardens, and through the narrow lanes which at that time were intermingled with the Faubourg St. Antoine, he entered the high road again just where the town ended, and the country began; and putting his horse into a quick pace, made the best of his way onward toward Poitou.

As he now went forth he looked not back, and he had gone on for five or six miles, when the belief that he heard the feet of horses fol-

lowing fast made him pause and turn. He was not mistaken in the supposition. There were two horsemen on the road, about five or six hundred yards behind him; but they slackened their pace as soon as he paused; and remembering the words written by Jerome Riquet; that he would find friends upon the road, he thought it better not to inquire into the matter any further, but make the most of his time, and go on. He thus proceeded without drawing a rein for about five and thirty miles, the men who were behind him still keeping him in sight, but never approaching nearer than a certain distance.

The road which he had chosen was that of Orleans, though not the most direct; but by taking it, he avoided all that part of the country through which he was most likely to be pursued if his flight were speedily discovered. At length, in the neighbourhood of the little town of Angerville, a man appeared on horseback at the turning of one of the roads. He was evidently waiting for some one, and rode up to the Count as soon as ever he appeared, saying merely, "Monsieur du Sac."

"The same," replied the Count; and the man immediately said, "This way, then, Sir."

The Count followed without any reply, and the man rode on at a quick pace for the distance of fully three miles further. The horsemen turned as the Count had turned, but the road had become tortuous, and they were soon lost to his sight. At length, however, the high stone walls, overtopped with trees, and partly covered with ivy, which usually surrounded the park of an old French château, appeared, and making a circuit round three sides of this enclosure, the Count and his guide came suddenly to the large iron gates, which gave admission to a paved court leading to another set of gates, with a green esplanade and a terrace above; while the whole was crowned by a heavy mass of stonework, referable to no sort of architecture but itself. Round these courts were various small buildings, scarcely fitted indeed for human habitation, but appropriated to gardeners and gatekeepers, and other personages of the kind; and from one of these, as soon as the Count appeared, instantly rushed forth Jerome Riquet himself, kissing his master's hand with sincere joy and affection, which was not at all decreased by a consciousness that his liberation had been effected by the skill, genius, and intrigue of the said Jerome Riquet himself.

“Dismount, my Lord, in all safety,” he said; “we have taken measures to insure that you should not be traced. Refreshments of every kind are ready for you; and if you so please, you can take a comfortable night’s repose before you go on.”

“That were scarcely prudent, Riquet,” replied the Count; “but I will at all events pause for a time, and you can tell me all that has happened. First, whose dwelling is this?”

“The house of good Monsieur Perault at Angerville,” replied the valet. “He has been dead for about two months, and his old maître d’hôtel, being a friend of mine, and still in the family, gave me the keys of the château to be your first resting place.”

On entering the château, Albert of Morseiul found it completely thronged with his own servants; and the joyful faces that crowded round, some in smiles and some in tears, to see their young lord liberated, was not a little sweet to his heart. Some balm, indeed, was necessary to heal old wounds, before new ones were inflicted; and, though Riquet moved through the assembled attendants with the conscious dignity of one who had conferred the benefit in which they rejoiced, yet he hastened to lead his young

lord on, and to have the room cleared, having much indeed to tell. His tale was painful to the Count in many respects; but, being given by snatches, as the various questions of his master elicited one fact after another, we will attempt to put it in more continuous form, and somewhat shorter language, taking it up at events which, though long past, were now first explained.

From an accidental reference to the Count's journey from Morseiul to Poitiers, Riquet was led to declare the whole facts in regard to the commission which had been given by the King to Pelisson and St. Helie. The insatiable spirit of curiosity by which Maître Jerome was possessed, never let him rest till he had made the unhappy Curé of Guadrieul declare, by a manœuvre before related, what was in the sheepskin bag he carried; and, as soon as the valet heard that it was a commission from the King, his curiosity was still more strongly excited to ascertain the precise contents. For the purpose of so doing, he attached himself firmly to the Curé during the rest of the evening, made him smoke manifold pipes, induced him to eat every promotive of drinking that he

could lay his hands upon, plied him with wine, and then when half besotted, ventured to insinuate a wish to peep into the bag. The Curé, however, was firm to his trust even in the midst of drunkenness; he would peep into the bag with curious longings himself, but he would allow no one else to do so, and Riquet had no resource but to finish what he had so well commenced by a bottle of heady Burgundy in addition, which left the poor priest but strength enough to roll away to his chamber, and, conscious that he was burthened with matters which he was incompetent to defend, to lock the door tight behind him before he sunk insensible on his bed. He forgot, however, one thing, which it is as well for every one to remember; namely, that chambers have windows as well as doors; and Jerome Riquet, whose genius for running along house gutters was not less than his other high qualities, found not the slightest difficulty of effecting an entrance, and spending three or four hours in the examination of the sheepskin bag and its contents. With as much skill as if he had been brought up in the French post-office of that day, he opened the royal packet without even breaking the seals, and only inflicting a very slight and accidental tear

on one part of the envelope, which the keen eyes of Pelisson had afterwards discovered.

As soon as he saw the nature of the King's commission, Riquet, — who was no friend to persecution of any kind, and who well knew that all his master's plans would be frustrated, and the whole province of Poitou thrown into confusion if such a commission were opened on the first assembling of the states,—determined to do away with it altogether, and substitute an old pack of cards which he happened to have in his valise in place of that important document. He then proceeded to examine minutely and accurately the contents of the Curé's trunk mail, and more from a species of jocose malice than any thing else, he tore off a piece of the King's commission which could do no harm to any one, and folded it round the old tobacco box, which he had found wrapped up in a piece of paper very similar amongst the goods and chattels of the priest.

Besides this adventure, he had various others to detail to the Count, with the most important of which: namely, his interview with the King and Louvois at Versailles, the reader is already acquainted. But he went on from that point to relate, that, lingering about in the neighbour-

hood of the King's apartments, he had heard the order for his master's arrest given to Monsieur de Cantal. He flew home with all speed, but on arriving at the Count's hotel found that he had already gone to the palace, and that his arrest was certain.

His next question to himself was how he might best serve him under such circumstances; and, habituated from the very infancy of his valedhood to travesty himself in all sorts of disguises, he determined instantly on assuming the character of an Exempt of one of the courts of law, as affording the greatest probability of answering his purpose. He felt a degree of enjoyment and excitement in every species of trick of the kind which carried him through, when the least timidity or hesitation would have frustrated his whole plans. The fact is, that although it may seem a contradiction in terms, yet Maître Jerome was never so much in his own character as when he was personating somebody else.

The result of his acting on this occasion we already know, as far as the Count was concerned; but the moment that he had seen him lodged in the Bastille, the valet, calculating that his frolic might render Ver-

sailles a dangerous neighbourhood, retired to the Count's hotel in Paris, where a part of his apparel was still to be found, compounded rapidly the sympathetic ink from one of the many receipts stored up in his brain, and then flew with a handkerchief, properly prepared, to Clémence de Marly, whom he found alone with the Chevalier d'Evran. As his master had not made him acquainted with the occasional feelings of jealousy which he had experienced towards that gentleman, Jerome believed he had fallen upon the two persons from whom, out of all the world, his master would be most delighted to hear. The whole facts of the Count's arrest then were detailed and discussed, and the words written, which, as we have seen, were received by Albert of Morseuil in prison.

Afraid to go back to Versailles, Riquet hastened away into Poitou leaving to Clémence de Marly and the Chevalier d'Evran the task of liberating his lord, of which they seemed to entertain considerable hopes. On his return, however, he found, first, that all his fellow-servants having been faithful to him, the investigations regarding the appearance of the Exempt had ended in nothing being discovered, except that somebody had profanely personated one of those

awful personages ; and, secondly, that the Count was not only still in durance, but that little, if any, progress had been made towards effecting his liberation. The Duc de Rouvré, who seemed to be restored to the King's favour, was now a guest at the palace of Versailles : with Clémence de Marly the valet could not obtain an interview, though he daily saw her in company with the Chevalier d'Evran, and the report began to be revived that the King intended to bestow her hand upon that gentleman, who was now in exceedingly high favour with the monarch.

A scheme now took possession of the mind of Riquet, which only suggested itself in utter despair of any other plan succeeding ; and as, to use his own expression, the very attempt, if frustrated, would bring his head under the axe, he acknowledged to his lord that he had hesitated and trembled even while he prepared every thing for its execution. He went down once more into Poitou ; he communicated with all the friends and most favoured vassals of his master ; he obtained money and means for carrying every part of his scheme into effect, as soon as his lord should be liberated from the Bastille, and for securing his escape into Poitou,

where a choice of plans remained before him, of which we shall have to speak hereafter.

The great point, however, was to enable the Count to make his exit from the prison, and it was at this that the heart of Jerome Riquet failed. His was one of those far-seeing geniuses that never forget, in any situation, to obtain, from the circumstances of the present, any thing which may be, however remotely, advantageous in the future. Upon this principle he had acted in his conference with the King, and without any definite and immediate object but that of obtaining pardon for himself for past offences, he had induced the monarch, we must remember, to give him a document, of which he now proposed to take advantage. By a chemical process, very easily effected, he completely took out the ink in those parts of the document where his own name was written, and then, with slow and minute labour, substituted the name of his master in the place, imitating, even to the slightest stroke, the writing of the King. The date underwent the same change to suit his purpose, so that a complete pardon, in what appeared the undoubted hand of the King himself, was prepared for the Count de Mor-seiul.

This step having been taken, Riquet contemplated his work with pride, but fear, and the matter remained there for the whole day; but by the next morning he had become habituated to daring; and, resolved to make the document complete, he spent eight hours in forging, underneath, an order, in due form, for the Count's liberation; and the most practised eye could have scarcely found any difference between the lines there written and those of the King himself. In all probability, if Riquet could have obtained a scrap of Louvois' writing he would have added the countersign of the minister, but, as that was not to be had, he again laid the paper by, and was seized with some degree of panic at what he had done.

He had brought up, however, from Poitou, his lord's intendant, and several others of his confidential servants and attendants, promising them, with the utmost conceit and self-confidence, to set the Count at liberty. They now pressed him to fulfil his design, and while he hesitated, with some degree of tremour, the note which the old English officer had conveyed to him was put into his hands, and decided him at once. He entrusted the forged order to a person whom he could fully rely upon to deliver it at

the gates of the Bastille, stationed his relays upon the road, and prepared every thing for his master's escape.

Such was the account which he gave to his young lord, as he sat in the château of Angerville, and though he did not exactly express all that he had heard in regard to Clémence de Marly and the Chevalier d'Evran, he told quite enough to renew feelings in the bosom of the Count which he had struggled against long and eagerly.

“ Who were the men,” demanded the Count, “ that followed me on horseback ? ”

“ Both of them, Sir,” replied the man, “ were persons who would have delayed any pursuit of you at the peril of their own lives. One of them was your own man, Martin, whom you saved from being hung for a spy, by the night attack you made upon the Prince of Orange's quarters. The other, Sir, was poor Paul Virlay, who came up with the intendant of his own accord, with his heart well nigh broken, and with all the courage of despair about him.”

“ Poor Paul Virlay ! ” exclaimed the Count — “ his heart well nigh broken ! Why, what has happened to him, Jerome ? I left him in health and in happiness.”

“Ay, Sir,” replied the man, “but things have changed since then. Two hellish priests—I’ve a great mind to become à Huguenot myself—got hold of his little girl, and got her to say, or at least swore that she said, she would renounce her father’s religion. He was furious; and her mother, who had been ill for some days, grew worse, and took to her bed. The girl said she never had said so; the priests said she had, and brought a witness; and they seized her in her father’s own house, and carried her away to a convent. He was out when it happened, and when he came back he found his wife dying and his child gone. The mother died two days after; and Paul, poor fellow, whose brain was quite turned, was away for three days with his large sledgehammer with him, which nobody but himself could wield. Every body said that he was gone to seek after the priests, to dash their brains out with the hammer, but they heard of it, and escaped out of the province; and at the end of three days he came back quite calm and cool, but every body saw that his heart was broken. I saw him at Morseiul, poor fellow, and I have seldom seen so terrible a sight. The mayor, who has turned Catholic, you know, Sir, asked him if he had gone after the priests, to which

he said 'No;' but every one thinks that he did."

While Riquet was telling this tale the Count had placed his hands before his eyes, and it was evident that he trembled violently, moved by terrible and strongly conflicting feelings, the fiery struggle of which might well have such an influence on his corporeal frame. He rose from his seat slowly, however, when the man had done, and walked up and down the room more than once with a stern heavy step. At length, turning to Riquet again, he demanded,

"And in what state is the province?"

"Why, almost in a state of revolt, Sir," replied Riquet. "As far as I can hear, there are as many as a couple of thousand men in arms in different places. It is true they are doing no great things; that the intendant of the province, sometimes with the Bishop, sometimes with the Abbé St. Helie, marches hither and thither with a large body of troops, and puts down the revolt here, or puts down the revolt there. Till he hears that it has broken out in another place, he remains where it last appeared, quartering his soldiers upon the inhabitants, and, in the order of the day, allowing them *to do every thing but kill*. Then he drives

the people by thousands at a time to the churches of our religion, makes them take the mass, and breaks a few of them on the wheel when they spit the host out of their mouths. He then writes up to the King that he has made wonderful conversions; but before his letter can well reach Paris he is obliged to march to another part of the province, to put down the insurrection there, and to make converts, and break on the wheel as before."

"Say no more, say no more," cried the Count. "Oh, God! wilt thou suffer this to go on?"

Again he paced the room for several minutes, and then turning suddenly to Riquet, he said—"Riquet, you have shown yourself at once devoted, courageous, and resolute in the highest degree."

"Oh, Sir," interrupted the man, "you mistake: I am the most desperate coward that ever breathed."

"No jesting now, Riquet," said the Count, in a sorrowful tone; "no jesting now. My spirits are too much crushed, my heart too much torn to suffer me to hear one light word. After all that you have done for me, will you do one act more? Have you the courage to re-

turn to Paris this night, and carry a letter for me to Mademoiselle de Marly, and to bring me back her reply ?”

“ Well, Sir, well,” said Riquet, rubbing his hands, and then putting his fore-finger under his collar, and running it round his neck with a significant gesture, “ a man can be hanged but once in his life, at least as far as I know of; and, as Cæsar said, ‘ A brave man is but hanged once, a coward is hanged every day;’ therefore, as I see no other object that my father and mother could have in bringing me into the world, but that I should be hanged in your service, I will go to Paris, at the risk of accomplishing my destiny, with all my heart.”

“ Hark you, Riquet,” replied the Count, “ I will give you a means of security. If by any means you should be taken, and likely to be put to death for what you have done, tell those who take you, that, upon a distinct promise of pardon to you under the King’s own hand, the Count of Morseiul will surrender himself in your place. I will give you that promise under my hand, if you like.”

“ That is not necessary, Sir,” replied Riquet. “ Every body in all France knows that you keep your word. But pray write the letter quickly ;

for, ride as hard as I will, I shall have scarce time to reach Paris before bed-time; and I suppose you would not have the young lady awakened."

There was a degree of cold bitterness in Riquet's manner when he spoke thus of Clémence, which made the Count of Morseiul feel that the man thought he was deceived. But still, after what had passed before, he felt that he was bound to be more upon his guard against himself than against others; and he resolved that he would not be suspicious, that he would drive from his bosom every such feeling, that he would remember the indubitable proofs of affection that she had given him, and that he would act toward her as if her whole conduct had been under his eye, and had been such as he could most approve. The materials for writing were instantly procured, and while Riquet caused a fresh horse to be saddled, and prepared for his journey, the Count sat down and wrote as follows: —

“ MY BELOVED CLÉMENCE,

“ Thank God, I am once more at liberty; but the brightness of that blessing, great as it is under any circumstances, would be nearly

all tarnished and lost if I had not the hope that you would share it with me. I am now some way on the road to Poitou, where I hear that the most horrible and aggravated barbarities are daily being committed upon my fellow Protestants. My conduct there must be determined by circumstances; but I will own that my blood boils at the butchery and persecution I hear of. I remember the dear and cheering promises you have made—I remember the willingness and the joyfulness with which those promises were made, and that recollection renders it not madness,—renders it not selfishness to say to you, Come to me, my Clémence, come to me as speedily as possible; come and decide for me, when perhaps I may not have calmness to decide for myself! Come, and let us unite our fate for ever, and so far acquire the power of setting the will of the world at defiance. Were it possible, I would trust entirely to your love and your promises, in the hope that you would suffer the bearer of this, most faithful and devoted as he has shown himself to be, to guide you to me; but I fear that the little time he dare stay in Paris would render it impossible for you to make your escape with him. Should this, as I fear, be the case, write to me, if it be but a few lines, to tell me

how I can assist or aid you in your escape, and when it can be made. Adieu ! Heaven bless and guard you."

Before he had concluded Riquet had again appeared, telling him that he was ready to set out, and taking the somewhat useless precaution to seal his letter, the Count gave it into his hands, and saw him depart.

It was now about five o'clock in the evening; and as he knew that many a weary and expectant hour must pass before the man could return, the Count conferred with all the various attendants who had been collected at Angerville, and found that the account which Riquet had given him of the state of Poitou was confirmed in every respect. Each had some tale of horror or of cruelty. Paul Virlay, however, whom he had asked for more than once, did not appear; and it was discovered on inquiry that he had not even remained at Angerville, but with the cold and sullen sort of despair that had fallen upon him had ridden on, now that he judged the Count was in safety.

After a time the young nobleman, anxious for some repose both of mind and of body, cast himself upon a bed, in the hope of ob-

taining sleep; but it visited not his eyelids; dark and horrible and agitating visions peopled the hours of darkness, though slumber had no share in calling them up. At length, full two hours before he had expected that Riquet could return, the sound of a horse's feet, coming at a rapid pace, struck the Count's ear, as he lay and listened to the howling of the November wind; and, starting up, he went to the window of the room and gazed out. It was a clear night, with the moon up, though there were some occasional clouds floating quickly over the sky, and he clearly saw that the horseman was Riquet, and alone. Proceeding into the other room where he had left a light, he hastened down to meet him, asking whether he had obtained an answer.

“ I have, Sir,” replied the man; “ though I saw not the fair lady herself: yet Maria, the waiting woman, brought it in no long time. There it is;” and drawing it from his pocket, he gave it into the Count's hand. Albert of Morseiul hastened back with the letter, and tore it eagerly open; but what were the words that his eyes saw?

“ Cruel and unkind,” it began, “ and must I not add — alas, must I not add even to the

man that I love — ungenerous and ungrateful? What would I not have sacrificed, what would I not have done, rather than that this should have occurred, and that the first use you make of your liberty should be to fly to wage actual war against the crown! How shall I dare look up? I, who for weeks have been pleading that no such thought would ever enter into your noble and loyal nature. No, Albert, I cannot follow the messenger you send; or, to use the more true and straight-forward word, I *will* not; and never by my presence with you, however much I may still love you, will I countenance the acts to which you are now hurrying.”

It was signed “Clémence;” but it fell from the Count’s hand ere his eye had reached that word, and he gazed at it fixedly as it lay upon the ground for several moments, without attempting to raise it; then, turning with a sudden start to Riquet and another servant who stood by, as if for orders, he exclaimed — “To horse!”

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASTOR'S PRISON.

THE pillow of Clémence de Marly was wet with her tears, and sleep had not visited her eyes, when a quick knocking was heard at her door, and she demanded timidly who was there.

“It is I, Madam,” replied the voice of the Duchess de Rouvré’s maid.

“Then wait a moment, Mariette,” replied Clémence, “and I will open the door. She rose, put on a dressing gown, and by the light of the lamp which still stood unextinguished on the table, she raised and concealed, in a small casket, two letters which she had left open, and which bore evident signs of having been wept over before she retired to rest. The one was in the clear free handwriting of youth and strength; the other was in characters, every line of which spoke the feeble hand of age, infirmity, or sickness. When that was done, she opened the door which was locked, and admitted the Duchess’s maid, who was followed into the room

by her own attendant Maria, who usually slept in a little chamber hard by.

“What is the matter, Mariette?” demanded the young lady. “I can scarcely say that I have closed my eyes ere I am again disturbed.”

“I am sorry, Mademoiselle, to alarm you,” replied the woman; “but Maria would positively not wake you, so I was obliged to do it, for the Duke was sent for just as he was going to bed, and after remaining for two hours with the King has returned, and given immediate orders to prepare for a long journey. The Duchess sent me to let you know that such was the case, and that the carriages would be at the door in less than two hours.”

“Do you know whither they are going,” demanded Clémence, “and if I am to accompany them?”

“I know nothing from the Duke or the Duchess, Mademoiselle,” replied the woman, “but the Duke’s valet said that we were going either to Brittany or Poitou, for my lord had brought away a packet from the King addressed to somebody in those quarters; and you are going certainly, Mademoiselle, for the Duchess told me to tell you so, and the valet says that it is on account of you we are going; for that

the Chevalier came back with my lord the Duke, and when he parted with him, said, 'Tell Clémence, she shall hear from me soon.'

Clémence mused, but made no answer; and when in about an hour after, she descended to the saloon of the hotel, she found every thing in the confusion of departure, and the Duc de Rouvré standing by the table, at which his wife was seated, waiting for the moment of setting out, with a face wan, indeed, and somewhat anxious, but not so sorrowful or dejected as perhaps Clémence expected to see.

"I fear, my dear Duke," she said, approaching him and leaning her two hands affectionately upon his arm, "I fear that you, who have been to your poor Clémence a father indeed, are destined to have even more than a father's share of pains and anxieties with her. I am sure that all this to-night is owing to me, or to those that are dear to me, and that you have fallen under the King's displeasure on account of the rash steps of him whom I cannot yet cease to love."

"Not at all, my sweet Clémence; not at all, my sweet child," said the old nobleman, kissing her hand with that mingled air of gallant respect and affection which he always showed

towards her. "I do not mean to say, that your fair self has nothing to do with this business in any way, but certainly not in that way. It is about another business altogether, Clémence, that we are ordered to retire from the court; but not in disgrace, my dear young friend, we are by no means in disgrace. The King is perfectly satisfied that you have had no share in all the business of poor Albert of Morseiul; and when I told him how bitterly and deeply grieved you were, and how struck to the heart you seemed to have been, when you heard that the Count had fled to join the rebels in Poitou, he told me to bid you console yourself, saying, that he would find you another and a better husband soon."

Clémence's eyes were bent down upon the ground with an expression of grief and pain; but she looked up in a moment, and said, "Is it permitted me to ask you, my lord, how I am connected with this sudden removal?"

"Nay," he said, "nay, sweet Clémence, that I must not tell you. I scruple not to say, that I think his Majesty is acting without due consideration; but, of course, my first duty, like that of all his other subjects, is to obey; and he particularly wishes that nothing should be said

to you on the subject, as it might render one duty difficult by opposing to it another. At present the whole matter is quite simple; we have nothing to do but to set out as soon as these villanous lackeys have got the carriages ready."

Thus saying, the Duke turned away, evidently wishing to avoid further inquiries, and in about half an hour after Clémence was rolling away from Versailles with the Duke and Duchess de Rouvré, followed by a long train of carriages and attendants.

It is needless to trace a melancholy journey in the darkest and gloomiest weather of the month of November; but it was evident that the Duc de Rouvré was in haste, travelling early and late, and it also appeared, from his conversation as they went, that, though he was charged with no special mission from the King, he proposed only pausing for a short time in Poitou, and then bending his steps to some of his other estates. Indeed, he suffered it to be understood that, in all probability, for many months he should take but little repose, frequently changing his place of abode, and travelling from one city to another. Although the health of Madame de Rouvré was by no means vigorous,

and though far and rapid travelling never, at any time, had agreed with her, she made no objection, but seemed contented and happy with the arrangement, and even suggested that a journey to Italy might be beneficial to them all.

Clémence wondered but was silent; and at length, late on the afternoon of the sixth day after their departure, they arrived at the small town of Thouars, over which was brooding the dark grey fogs of a November evening. Not many miles remained to travel from Thouars to Ruffigny; and the Duke, who was of course well known in that part of the country, received visits of congratulation on his arrival from the principal officers and inhabitants of the town. At these visits, however, Clémence was not present. She sent down an excuse for not appearing during the evening; and when the Duke sent up to say he wished to see her for a moment, she was not to be found, nor had she, indeed, returned at the end of an hour.

Where was Clémence de Marly? it may be asked. She was in the dark and gloomy abode, often of crime and often of innocence, but ever of anguish and of sorrow. She was in the prison of the old château of Thouars. Not, indeed,

as one of those unfortunate beings, the involuntary inmates of the place, but as one coming upon the sad and solemn errand of visiting a dear and well-beloved friend for the last time. The office of governor of the prison, as it was seldom if ever used for the confinement of state offenders, had been suffered to fall into the hands of the mayor of the place, who delegated his charge to an old lieutenant, who again entrusted it to two subordinate gaolers, antique and rusty in their office as the keys they carried. It was with one of these that Clémence was speaking eagerly in the small dark passage that led into the interior of the building. She was habited in the ordinary grey cloak in which we have seen her twice before, and had with her still, on this occasion also, the faithful servant who had then attended her.

“Come, come, pretty mistress,” said the man, thrusting himself steadfastly in the way, “I tell you it is as much as my head is worth. He is condemned to be broken on the wheel to-morrow, and I dare admit nobody to him.”

“Look at these,” said Clémence, pouring some gold pieces from her purse into her open hand. “I offer you these if you will allow me

to speak with him for an hour, and if you refuse I shall certainly insist upon seeing the lieutenant of the governor himself. You know what manner of man he is, and whether he will reject what I shall offer him ; so he will get the money, and you will not, and I shall see the prisoner notwithstanding."

The man's resolution was evidently shaken to the foundation. He was an old man and fond of gold. The sight was pleasant to him, and, putting forth his hand, he lifted one piece between his finger and thumb, turned it over, and dropped it back again upon the others. The sound completed what the touch had begun.

" Well," he said at length, " I do not see why he should get it and I not. He is asleep, too, now in the arm-chair ; so it were a pity to wake him. You want to be with the old man an hour, do you, young woman ? Well, you must both go in then ; and I must go away and be absent with the keys, for fear the lieutenant should wake and go to see the prisoner."

" Do you mean to lock us in with him, then ?" exclaimed the maid, in some terror.

" Fear not, Maria !" said her mistress. " You, who have ever given me encouragement

and support, must not fear now. There is God even here."

"Be quick, then, and come along," said the gaoler, "but first give me the money." Clémence poured it into his hand; and when he had got it, he paused, hesitating as if he were tempted by the spirit of evil to keep the gold and refuse her admission. But if such were the case, a moment's reflection showed him that to attempt it would be ruinous; and he, therefore, led the way along the passage in which they were, putting his finger upon his lips to enjoin silence, as they passed by a part of the prison which seemed to be inhabited by those who had some means of obtaining luxuries. At length, however, he lowered a lantern which he carried, and pointed to two or three steps which led into another passage, narrower, damper, and colder than the former. At the distance of about fifty feet from the steps this corridor was crossed by another; and turning to the right over a rough uneven flooring of earth, with the faint light of the lantern gleaming here and there on the damp green glistening mould of the walls, he walked on till he reached the end, and then opened a low heavy door.

All within was dark, and, as the man drew

back to let his female companions pass, the attendant, Maria, laid her hand upon the lantern, saying, "Give us a light, at least!"

"Ah! well, you may have it," grumbled forth the gaoler; and Clémence, who though resolute to her purpose, still felt the natural fears of her sex and her situation, turned to him, saying, "I give you three more of those pieces when you open the door again for me."

"Oh, I'll do that — I'll do that!" replied the man, quickened by the gold; and while Maria took the lantern and passed the door, Clémence gazed down the step or two that led into the dungeon, and then with a pale cheek and wrung heart followed. The door closed behind them; the harsh bolt of the lock grated as the man turned the key; and, the power of retreat being at an end, the beautiful girl threw back the hood of the cloak, and gazed on before her into the obscure vault, which the feeble light of the lantern had scarcely deprived of any part of its darkness. The only thing that she could perceive, at first, was a large heavy pillar in the midst, supporting the pointed vault of the dungeon, with the faint outline of a low wooden bed, with the head thereof resting against the column.

No one spoke; and nothing but a faint moan

broke the awful silence. It required the pause of a moment or two ere Clémence could overcome the feelings of her own heart sufficiently to take the lantern and advance; opening a part of the dim horn as she did so, in order to give greater light. A step or two farther forward brought her to the side of the bed; and the light of the lantern now showed her distinctly the venerable form of Claude de l'Estang stretched out upon the straw with which the pallet was filled. A heavy chain was round his middle, and the farther end thereof was fastened to a stanchion in the column.

The minister was dressed in a loose grey prison gown, and, although he saw the approach of some one in the abode of misery in which he was placed, he moved not at all, but remained with his arm bent under his head, his eyes turned slightly towards the door, his lower lip dropping as if with debility or pain, and his whole attitude displaying the utter lassitude and apathy of exhaustion and despair. When Clémence was within a foot or two of his side, however, he slowly raised his eyes towards her; and in a moment, when he beheld her face, a bright gleam came over his faded countenance, awakening in it all those peculiar signs and

marks of strong intellect and intense feeling which the moment before had seemed extinct and gone. It was like the lightning flashing over some noble ruin in the midst of the deep darkness of the night.

“Is it you, my sweet child?” he cried, in a faint voice that was scarcely audible even in the midst of the still silence. “Is it you that have come to visit me in this abode of wretchedness and agony? This is indeed a blessing and a comfort; a blessing to see that there are some faithful even to the last, a comfort and a joy to find that she on whose truth and steadfastness I had fixed such hopes, has not deceived me; — and yet,” he exclaimed, while Clémence gazed upon him with the tears rolling rapidly over her cheeks, and the sobs struggling hard for utterance, “and yet, why, oh why have you come here? why have you risked so much, my child, to soothe the few short hours that to-morrow’s noon shall see at an end?”

“Oh, dear friend,” said Clémence, kneeling down beside the pallet, “could I do otherwise, when I was in this very town, than strive to see you, my guide, my instructor, my teacher in right, my warner of the path that I ought to shun? Could I do otherwise, when I thought that there

was none to soothe, that there was none to console you, that in the darkness and the agony of these awful hours there was not one voice to speak comfort, or to say one word of sympathy?"

"My child, you are mistaken," replied the old man, striving to raise himself upon his arm, and sinking back again with a low groan. "There has been one to comfort, there has been one to support me. He, to whom I go, has never abandoned me: neither in the midst of insult and degradation; no, nor in the moment of agony and torture, nor in those long and weary hours that have passed since they bore these ancient limbs from the rack on which they had bound them, and cast them down here to endure the time in darkness, in pain, and in utter helplessness, till at noon to-morrow the work will be accomplished on the bloody wheel, and the prisoner in this ruined clay will receive a joyful summons to fly far to his Redeemer's throne."

The tears rained down from the eyes of Clémence de Marly like the drops of a summer shower; but she dared not trust herself to speak: and after pausing to take breath, which came evidently with difficulty, the old man went on, "But still I say, Clémence, still I say, why

have you come hither? You know not the danger, you know not the peril in which you are."

"What!" cried Clémence, "should I fear danger, should I fear peril in such a case as this? Let them do to me what they will, let them do to me what God permits them to do! To have knelt here beside you, to have spoken one word of comfort to you, to have wiped the drops from that venerable brow in this awful moment, would be a sufficient recompense to Clémence de Marly for all that she could suffer."

"God forbid," cried the pastor, "that they should make you suffer as they can. You know not what it is, my child — you know not what it is! If it were possible that an immortal spirit, armed with God's truth, should consent unto a lie, that torture might well produce so awful a falling off! But you recall me, my child, to what I was saying. I have not been alone, I have not been un comforted even here. The word of God has been with me in my heart, the Spirit of God has sustained my spirit, the sufferings of my Saviour have drowned my sufferings, the hope of immortality has made me bear the utmost pains of earth. When they had

taken away the printed words from before mine eyes, when they had shut out the light of heaven, so that I could not have seen, even if the holy book had been left, they thought they had deprived me of my solace. But they forgot that every word thereof was in my heart; that it was written there, with the bright memories of my early days; that it was traced there with the calm recollections of my manhood; that it was printed there with sufferings and with tears; that it was graven there with smiles and joys; that with every act of my life, and thought of my past being, those words of the revealed will of God were mingled, and never could be separated; and it came back to me even here, and blessed me in the dungeon; it came back to me before the tribunal of my enemies, and gave me a mouth and wisdom; it came back to me on the torturing rack, and gave me strength to endure without a groan; it came back to me even as I was lying mangled here, and made the wheel of to-morrow seem a blessed resting-place."

"Alas, alas!" cried Clémence, "when I see you here; when I see you thus suffering; when I see you thus the sport of cruelty and persecution, I feel that I have judged too harshly of

poor Albert, in regard to his taking arms against the oppressors; I feel that perhaps, like him, I should have thus acted, even though I called the charge of ingratitude upon my head."

"And is he free, then? is he free?" demanded the pastor, eagerly.

"He is free," replied Clémence, "and, as we hear, in arms against the King."

"Oh, entreat him to lay them down," exclaimed the pastor; "beseech him not to attempt it. Tell him that ruin and death can be the only consequences: tell him that the Protestant church is at an end in France: tell him that flight to lands where the pure faith is known and loved is the only hope: tell him that resistance is destruction to him, and to all others. Tell him so, my child, tell him so from me: tell him so — but, hark!" he continued, "what awful sound is that?" for even while he was speaking, and apparently close to the spot where the dungeon was situated, a sharp explosion took place, followed by a multitude of heavy blows given with the most extraordinary rapidity. No voices were distinguished for some minutes; and the blows continued without a moment's cessation, thundering one upon the

other with a vehemence and force which seemed to shake the whole building.

“It is surely,” said Clémence, “somebody attacking the prison door. Perhaps, oh Heaven ! perhaps it is some one trying to deliver you.”

“Heaven forbid !” exclaimed the old man ; “Heaven forbid that they should madly rush to such an attempt for the purpose of saving, for a few short hours, this wretched frame from that death which will be a relief. Hark, do you not hear cries and shouts ?”

Clémence listened, and she distinctly heard many voices apparently elevated, but at a distance, while the sound of the blows continued thundering upon what was evidently the door of the prison, and a low murmur, as if of persons speaking round, joined with the space to make the farther cries indistinct. A pause succeeded for a moment or two ; but then came the sound of galloping horse, and then a sharp discharge of musketry, instantly followed by the loud report of fire-arms from a spot immediately adjacent to the building. Clémence clasped her hands in terror, while her attendant Maria, filled with the dangerous situation in which they were placed, ran and pushed the

door of the dungeon, idly endeavouring to force it open.

In the mean while, for two or three minutes nothing was heard but shouts and cries, with two or three musket shots; then came a volley, then another, then two or three more shots, then the charging of horse mingled with cries, and shouts, and screams, while still the thundering blows continued, and at length a loud and tremendous crash was heard shaking the whole building. A momentary pause succeeded, the blows were no longer heard, and the next sound was the rush of many feet. A moment of doubt and apprehension, of anxiety, nay of terror, followed. Clémence was joyful at the thought of the pastor's deliverance; but what, she asked herself, was to be her own fate, even if the purpose of those who approached was the good man's liberation. Another volley from without broke in upon the other sounds; but in an instant after the rushing of the feet approached the door where they were, and manifold voices were heard speaking.

"It is locked," cried one; "where can the villain be with the keys?"

"Get back," cried another loud voice; "give me but a fair stroke at it."

A blow like thunder followed; and, seeming to fall upon the locks and bolts of the door, dashed them at once to pieces, driving a part of the wood-work into the dungeon itself. Two more blows cast the whole mass wrenched from its hinges to the ground. A multitude of people rushed in, some of them bearing lights, - all armed to the teeth, some bloody, some begrimed with smoke and gunpowder; fierce excitement flashing from every eye, and eager energy upon every face.

"He is here, he is here," they shouted to the others without. "Make way, make way, let us bring him out."

"But who are these women?" cried another voice.

"Friends, friends, dear friends, come to comfort me," cried the pastor.

"Blessings on the tongue that so often has taught us," cried other voices, while several ran forward and kissed his hands with tears; "blessings on the heart that has guided and directed us."

"Stand back, my friends, stand back," cried a gigantic man, with an immense sledge-hammer in his hand, "let me break the chain;" and at a single blow he dashed the strong links to atoms.

“Now bring them all along!” he cried, “now bring them all along! Take up the good man on the bed, and carry him out.”

“Bring them all along! bring them all along!” cried a thousand voices, and without being listened to in any thing that she had to say, Clémence, clinging as closely as she could to her attendant, was hurried out along the narrow passages of the prison, which were now flashing with manifold lights, into the dark little square which was found filled with people. Multitudes of lights were in all the windows round, and, covering the prison, a strong band of men were drawn up facing the opposite street. A number of persons on horseback were in front of the band, and, by the lights which were flashing from the torches in the street, one commanding figure appeared to the eyes of Clémence at the very moment she was brought forth from the doors of the prison, stretching out his hand towards the men behind him, and shouting, in a voice that she could never forget, though now that voice was raised into tones of loud command, such as she had never heard it use. “Hold! hold! the man that fires a shot dies! Not one unnecessary shot, not one unnecessary blow!”

Clémence strove to turn that way, and to fly towards the hotel where Monsieur de Rouvré lodged ; but she was borne away by the stream, which seemed to be now retreating from the town. At the same moment an armed man laid gently hold of her cloak, seeing her efforts to free herself, and said, —

“ This way, lady, this way. It is madness for you to think to go back now. You are with friends. You are with one who will protect you with his life, for your kindness to the murdered and the lost.”

She turned round to gaze upon him, not recollecting his voice ; and his face, in the indistinct light, seemed to her like a face remembered in a dream, connected with the awful scene of the preaching on the moor, and the dark piece of water, and the dying girl killed by the shot of the dragoons. Ere she could ask any questions, however, the stream of people hurried her on, and in a few minutes she was out of Thouars, and in the midst of the open country round.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEATH OF THE PERSECUTED.

WHEN the flight had been conducted for about two miles in the midst of the perfect darkness which surrounded the whole scene—for the lights and torches which had appeared in the town had been extinguished with the exception of one or two, on leaving it—the voice which had before addressed Clémence de Marly again spoke nearer, apparently giving command, as some one in authority over the others.

“Where is the litter?” he exclaimed.—
“Where is the litter that was brought for the good minister? Bring it hither: he will be more easy in that.”

Clémence had kept as *néar* as she could to the spot where Claude de l’Etang was carried, and she now heard him answer in a faint and feeble voice, —

“Do not move me: in pity do not move me. My limbs are so strained and dislocated by the

rack, that the slightest movement pains me. Carry me as I am, if you will ; but move me not from this bed."

" Well, then, place these two ladies in the litter," said the same voice. " We shall go faster then."

Without asking her consent, Clémence de Marly was placed in the small hand-litter which had been brought for the pastor ; her maid took the place by her side, and, lifted on the shoulders of four men, she was carried on more quickly, gaining a faint and indistinct view of what was passing around, from the more elevated situation in which she now was.

They were mounting slowly the side of the hill, about two miles from the town of Thouars, and she could catch a distant view of the dark towers and masses of the town as it then existed, rising above the objects around. From thence, as far as her eye was able to distinguish, a stream of people was flowing on all along the road to the very spot where she was, and several detached parties were seen here and there, crossing the different eminences on either side, so that the force assembled must have been very considerable. She listened eagerly for any sound from the direction of Thouars.

apprehensive at every moment that she would hear the firing renewed; for she knew, or at least she believed she knew, that Albert of Morseiul, with the better disciplined band which he seemed to command, would be the last to leave the city he had so boldly entered. Nothing, however, confirmed her expectation. There was a reddish light over the town, as if there were either fires in the streets, or that the houses were generally lighted up; but all was silent, except a dull distant murmur, heard when the sound of the marching feet ceased from any cause for a moment. Few words passed between Clémence and her attendant; for though Maria was a woman of a calm determined spirit in moments of immediate danger, and possessed with a degree of religious zeal, which was a strong support in times of peril and difficulty, yet the scenes in the prison and the dungeon, the horrors which she had only dreamt of before brought actually before her eyes, had not precisely unnerved, but had rendered her thoughtful and silent. The only sentence which she ventured to address to her mistress, without being spoken to, was, —

“ Oh, Madam, is the young Count so much to blame, after all ? ”

“Alas, Maria,” replied Clémence, in the same low tone, “I think that all are to blame, more or less. Deep provocation has certainly been given; but I do think that Albert ought to have acted differently. He had not these scenes before his eyes when he fled to put himself at the head of the insurgents; and ere he did so, he certainly owed something to me and something to the King. Nevertheless, since I have seen what I have seen, and heard what I have heard, I can make excuses which I could not make before.”

The attendant made no reply, and the conversation dropped. The march continued rapidly for three or four hours, till at length there was a short halt; and a brief consultation seemed to take place between two or three of the leaders on horseback. The principal part of the men on foot, exhausted as it appeared by great exertion, sat or lay down by the road side; but ere the conference had gone on for above five minutes, a cavalier, followed by several other men on horseback, came up at the full gallop; and again the deep mellow tones of that remarkable voice struck the ear of Clémence de Marly, and made her whole frame thrill. His words, or as they appeared com-

mands, were but few; and, without either approaching the side of Claude de l'Estang or herself, he rode back again in haste, and the march was renewed.

Ere long a fine cold rain began to fall, chilling those it lighted on to the very heart; and Clémence thought she perceived that as they advanced the number of people gradually fell away. At length, after a long and fatiguing march through the night, as the faint grey of the dawn began to appear, she found that, at the very utmost, there were not above a hundred of the armed Protestants around her. The party was evidently under the command of a short but powerfully made man, on horseback, whom she recognised as the person who had carried the unfortunate novice Claire in his arms to the house of Claude de l'Estang. He rode on constantly by the side of the bed in which the good pastor was carried on men's shoulders, and bowing down his head from time to time, he spoke to him with what seemed words of comfort and hope. They were now on a part of the road from Thouars towards Nantes, that passed through the midst of one of those wide sandy tracts called in France *landes*, across which a sort of causeway had been

made by felled trees, rough and painful of passage even to the common carts of the country. This causeway, however, was soon quitted by command of Armand Herval. One party took its way through the sands to the right; and the rest, following the litters, bent their course across the country, towards a spot where a dark heavy line bounded the portion of the *landes* within sight, and seemed to denote a large wood of the deep black pine, which grows better than any other tree in that sandy soil. It was near an hour before they reached the wood; and even underneath its shadow the shifting sand continued, only diversified a little by a few thin blades of green grass, sufficient to feed the scanty flocks of sheep, which form the only riches of that tract.

In the midst of the wood—where they had found or formed a little oasis around them—were two shepherds' cottages; and to these the party commanded by Armand Herval at once directed its course. An old man and two boys came out as they approached, but with no signs of surprise; and Claude de l'Estang was carried to one of the cottages, into which Clémence followed. She had caught a sight of the good man's face as they bore him past her, and she

saw that there was another sad and painful task before her, for which she nerved her mind.

“Now, good Antoine,” said Armand Herval, speaking to one of the shepherds, “lead out the sheep with all speed, and take them over all the tracks of men and horses that you may meet with. You will do it carefully, I know. We have delivered the good man, as you see ; but I fear — I fear much that we have after all come too late, for the butchers have put him to the question, and almost torn him limb from limb. God knows I made what speed I could, and so did the Count.”

The old shepherd to whom he spoke made no reply, but listened, gazing in his face with a look of deep melancholy. One of the younger men who stood by, however, said, “We heard the firing. I suppose they strove hard to keep him.”

“That they assuredly did !” replied Herval, his brows knitting as he spoke ; “and if we had not been commanded by such a man, they would not only have kept him, but us too. One half of our people failed us. Boursault was not there. Kerac and his band never came. We were full seven hundred short, and then the petard went off too soon, and did no good,

but brought the whole town upon us. They had dragoons, too, from Niort ; and tried first to drive us back, then to take us in flank by the tower-street, then to barricade the way behind us ; but they found they had to do with a Count de Morseiul, and they were met every where, and every where defeated. Yet, after all," continued the man, " he will ruin us from his fear of shedding any blood but his own. But I must go in and see after the good man ; and then speed to the woods. We shall be close round about, and one sound of a conch* will bring a couple of hundred to help you, good Antoine."

Thus saying, he went into the cottage, where Clémence had already taken her place by the side of the unhappy pastor's bed ; and, on the approach of Herval, she raised her finger gently to indicate that he slept. He had, indeed, fallen into momentary slumber, utterly ex-

* This large shell is used in many of the sea-coast districts of France still, for the purpose of giving signals. The sound, when properly blown, is very powerful and peculiar. They assert that across a level country it can be heard six miles. I have myself heard it more than two, and so distinctly, that it must have been audible at a much greater distance.

hausted by suffering and fatigue; but the fallen temples — the sharpened features — the pale ashy hue of the countenance, showed to the eyes of Clémence, at least, that the sleep was not³ that from which he would wake refreshed and better. Herval, less acute in his perceptions, judged differently; and, after assuring Clémence in a whisper that she was quite in safety there, as the woods round were filled with the band, he left her, promising to return ere night.

Clémence would fain have asked after Albert of Morseiul, and might, perhaps, have expressed a wish to see him; but there were strange feelings of timidity in her heart which kept her silent till the man was gone, and then she regretted that she had not spoken, and accused herself of weakness. During the time that she now sat watching by the pastor's side, she had matter enough for thought in her own situation. What was now to become of her, was a question that frequently addressed itself to her heart; and, more than once, as she thus sat and pondered, the warm ingenuous blood rushed up into her cheek at thoughts which naturally arose in her bosom from the consideration of the strange position in which she was

placed. Albert of Morseiul had not seen her, she knew. He could not even divine or imagine that she was at Thouars at all, much less in the prison itself; but yet she felt somewhat reproachfully towards him, as if he should have divined that it was she whom he saw borne along, not far from the unhappy pastor. Though she acknowledged, too, in her own heart, that there were great excuses to be made for the decided part which her lover had taken in the insurrection of that part of the country, still she was not satisfied, altogether, with his having done so; still she called him, in her own heart, both rash and ungrateful.

On the other hand, she remembered, that she had written to him in haste, and in some degree of anger, or, at least, of bitter disappointment; that she had refused, without explaining all the circumstances which prevented her, to share his flight as she had previously promised; that, hurried and confused, she had neither told him that, at the very time she was writing, the Duchess de Rouvré waited to accompany her to the court, and that to fly at such a moment was impossible; nor that, during the whole of the following day, she was to remain at Versailles, where the eyes

of every one would be upon her, more especially attracted towards her by the news of her lover's flight, which must, by that time, be generally known. She feared, too, that in that letter she had expressed herself harshly, even unkindly; she feared that those very words might have driven the Count into the desperate course which he had adopted, and she asked herself, with feelings such as she had never experienced before, when contemplating a meeting with Albert of Morseiul, how would he receive her?

In short, in thinking of the Count, she felt that she had been somewhat in the wrong in regard to her conduct towards him. But she felt, also, at the same time, that he had been likewise in the wrong, and, therefore, what she had first to anticipate were the words of mutual reproach, rather than the words of mutual affection. Such was one painful theme of thought, and how she was to shape her own immediate conduct was another. To return to the house of the Duc de Rouvré seemed utterly out of the question. She had been found in the prison of Claude de l'Estang. Her religious feelings could no longer be concealed; her renunciation of the Catholic faith was sure, at that

time, to be looked upon as nothing short of treason; and death or eternal imprisonment was the only fate that would befall her, if she were once cast into the hands of the Roman Catholic party.

What then was she to do? Was she to throw herself at once upon the protection of Albert of Morseiul? Was she to bind her fate to his for ever, at the very moment when painful points of difference had arisen between them? Was she to cast herself upon his bounty as a suppliant, instead of holding the same proud situation she had formerly held, — instead of being enabled to confer upon him that which he would consider an inestimable benefit, while she herself enhanced its value beyond all price, by the sacrifice of all and every thing for him? Was she now, on the contrary, — when it seemed as if she had refused to make that sacrifice for his sake, — to come to him, as a fugitive, claiming his protection, to demand his bounty and his support, and to supplicate permission to share the fate in which he might think she had shown a disinclination to participate, till she was compelled to do so?

The heart of Clémence de Marly was wrung at the thought. She knew that Albert of Mor-

seïul was generous, noble, kind-hearted. She felt that, very likely, he might view the case in much brighter hues than she herself depicted it to her own mind; she felt that, if she were a suppliant to him, no reproach would ever spring to his lips; no cold averted look would ever tell her that he thought she had treated him ill. But she asked herself whether those reproaches would not be in his heart; and the pride, which might have taken arms and supported her under any distinct and open charge, gave way at the thought of being condemned, and yet cherished.

How should she act, then? how should she act? she asked herself; and as Clémence de Marly was far from one of those perfect creatures who always act right from the first impulse, the struggle between contending feelings was long and terrible, and mingled with some tears. Her determination, however, was right at length.

“I will tell him all I have felt, and all I think,” she said. “I will utter no reproach: I will say not one word to wound him: I will let him see once more, how deeply and truly I love him. I will hear, without either pride or anger, any thing that Albert of Morseïul will say to me, and then, having done so, I will trust to his generosity to do the rest. I need not

fear! Surely, I need not fear!" and, with this resolution, she became more composed, the surest and the strongest proof that it was right.

But, to say the truth, since the perils of the night just passed, since she had beheld him she loved in a new character; since, with her own eyes, she had seen him commanding in the strife of men, and every thing seeming to yield to the will of his powerful and intrepid mind, new feelings had mingled with her love for him, of which, what she had experienced when he rode beside her at the hunting party at Poitiers, had been but, as it were, a type. It was not fear, but it was some degree of awe. She felt that, with all her own strength of mind, with all her own brightness of intellect and self-possession, there were mightier qualities in his character to which she must bow down: that she, in fact, was woman, altogether woman, in his presence.

As she thus thought, a slight motion on the bed where Claude de l'Estang was laid made her turn her eyes thither. The old man had awoke from his short slumber, and his eyes, still bright and intelligent, notwithstanding the approach of death and the exhaustion of his shattered frame, were turned towards her with an earnest and a melancholy expression.

“ I hope you feel refreshed,” said Clémence, bending over him. “ You have had some sleep ; and I trust it has done you good.”

“ Do not deceive yourself, my dear child,” replied the old man. “ No sleep can do me good, but that deep powerful one which is soon coming. I wait but God’s will, Clémence, and I trust that he will soon give the spirit liberty. It will be in mercy, Clémence, that he sends death ; for were life to be prolonged, think what it would be to this torn and mangled frame. Neither hand nor foot can I move, nor were it possible to give back strength to my limbs or ease to my body. Every hour that I remain, I look upon but as a trial of patience and of faith, and I will not murmur : no, Clémence, not even in thought, against His almighty will, who bids me drag on the weary minutes longer. But yet, when the last of those minutes has come, oh ! how gladly shall I feel the summons that others dread and fly from ! I would fain, my child,” he said, “ I would fain hear : and from your lips : some of that blessed word which the misguided persecutors of our church deny unmutilated to the blind followers of their faith, though every word therein speaks hope, and consolation, and counsel, and direction to the heart of man.”

“Alas ! good father,” replied Clémence, “the Bible which I always carry with me, was left behind when I came to see you in prison, and I know not where to find one here.”

“The people in this, or the neighbouring cottage, have one,” said the pastor. “They are good honest souls, whom I have often visited in former days.”

As the good woman of the cottage had gone out, almost immediately after the arrival of the party, to procure some herbs, which she declared would soothe the pastor greatly, Clémence proceeded to the other cottage, where she found an old man with a Bible in his hand, busily reading a portion thereof to a little boy who stood near. He looked up, and gave her the book as soon as she told him the purpose for which she came, and then, following into the cottage where the pastor lay, he and the boy stood by, and listened attentively while she read such chapters as Claude de l’Estang expressed a wish to hear.

Those chapters were not, in general, such as might have been supposed. They were not those which hold out the glorious promises of everlasting life to men who suffer for their faith in this state of being. They were not such as pourtray to us, in its real and spiritual character, that

other world, to which the footsteps of all are tending. It seemed as if, of such things, the mind of the pastor was so fully convinced, so intimately and perfectly sure, that they were as parts of his own being. But the passages that he selected were those in which our Redeemer lays down all the bright, perfect, and unchangeable precepts for the rule and governance of man's own conduct, which form the only code of law and philosophy that can indeed be called divine. And in that last hour it seemed the greatest hope and consolation which the dying man could receive, to ponder upon those proofs of divine love and wisdom which nothing but the Spirit of God himself could have dictated.

Thus passed the whole of the day. From time to time Clémence paused, and the pastor spoke a few words to those who surrounded him: words of humble comment on what was read, or pious exhortation. At other times, when his fair companion was tired, the attendant Maria would take the book and read. No noises, no visit from without, disturbed the calm. It seemed as if their persecutors were at fault; and though from time to time one of the different members of those shepherd families passed in or out, no other persons were seen moving upon the

face of the *landes*; no sounds were heard but their own low voices throughout the short light of a November day. To one fresh from the buzz of cities, and the busy activity of man, the contrast of the stillness and the solitude was strange; but doubly strange and exceeding solemn were they to the mind of her who came, fresh from the perturbed and fevered visions of the preceding night, and saw that day lapse away like a long and quiet sleep.

Towards the dusk of the evening, however, her attendant laid her hand upon her arm as she was still reading, saying, "There is a change coming;" and Clémence paused and gazed down upon the old man's countenance. It looked very grey; but whether from the shadows of the evening, or from the loss of whatever hue of living health remained, she could hardly tell. But the difference was not so great in the colour as in the expression. The look of pain and suffering which, notwithstanding all his efforts to bear his fate with tranquillity, had still marked that fine expressive countenance, was gone, and a calm and tranquil aspect had succeeded, although the features were extremely sharpened, the eye sunk, and the temples hollow. It was the look of a

body and a spirit at peace; and, for a moment, as the eyes were turned up towards the sky, Clémence imagined that the spirit was gone: but the next moment he looked round towards her, as if inquiring why she stopped.

“How are you, Sir?” she said. “You seem more at ease.”

“I am quite at ease, Clémence,” replied the old man. “All pain has left me. I am somewhat cold, but that is natural; and for the last half hour the remains of yesterday’s agony have been wearing away, as I have seen snow upon a hill’s side melt in the April sunshine. It is strange, and scarcely to be believed, that death should be so pleasant; for this is death, my child, and I go away from this world of care and pain with a foretaste of the mercies of the next. It is very slow, but still it is coming, Clémence, and bringing healing on its wings. Death, the messenger of God’s will, to one that trusts in his mercy, is indeed the harbinger of that peace of God which passes all understanding.”

He paused a little, and his voice had grown considerably weaker, even while he spoke. “God forgive my enemies,” he said at length, “and the mistaken men who persecute others for

their soul's sake. God forgive them, and yield them a better light; for, oh how I wish that all men could feel death only as I feel it!"

Such were the last words of Claude de l'Estang. They were perfectly audible and distinct to every one present, and they were spoken with the usual calm sweet simplicity of manner which had characterised all the latter part of his life. But after he had again paused for two or three minutes, he opened his lips as if to say something more, but no sound was heard. He instantly felt that such was the case, and ceased; but he feebly stretched forth his hand toward Clémence, who bent her head over it, and dewed it with her tears.

When she raised her eyes, they fell upon the face of the dead.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISCOVERY OF ERROR.

WE must now change the scene and time, though the spot to which we will conduct the reader is not situated more than ten miles from that in which the events took place recorded in the last chapter, and only one day's interval had elapsed. Considerably more inland, it presented none of that sandy appearance which characterises the *landes*. The vegetation also was totally different, the rich, even rank, grass spreading under the tall trees of the forest, and the ivy covering those which had lost their leaves thus early in the year.

There was a little château belonging to an inferior noble of the province, situated in the midst of one of those wide woods which the French of that day took the greatest pains to maintain in a flourishing condition, both for the sake of the fuel which they afforded, and the cover that they gave to the objects of

the chase. The château itself was built, as usual, upon an eminence of considerable elevation, overlooking the forest world around, and in its immediate neighbourhood the wood was cleared away so as to give an open esplanade, along which, upon the present occasion, some fifteen hundred or two thousand men had passed the preceding day and night: having liberated the poor pastor of Auron on the night before. Some few tents of rude construction, some huts hastily raised, had been their only shelter; but they murmured not; and indeed it was not from such causes that any of those who deserted from the body of Protestant insurgents quitted the standard of their leader. It was, that the agents of the governing priesthood had long been busy amongst them, and had sapped the principles and shaken the resolution of many of those who even showed themselves willing to take arms, but who soon fell away in the hour of need, acting more detrimentally on their own cause than if they had absolutely opposed it, or abandoned it from the first. Doubts of each other, and hesitation in their purposes, had thus been spread through the Protestants; and though, of the number assembled there, few existed who had now either inclination or oppor-

tunity to turn back, yet they thought with gloomy apprehension upon the defection that was daily taking place in the great body of Huguenots throughout France ; and their energies were chilled even if their resolution was not shaken.

The day of which we now speak rose with a brighter aspect than the preceding one, and it was scarcely more than daylight when the gates of the castle were opened, the horses of the Count de Morseiul and his immediate officers and attendants were brought out ; and in a minute after, he himself, booted and spurred, and bearing energetic activity in his eye, came forth upon the esplanade, surrounded by a number of persons, who were giving him information, or receiving his orders. The men who were gathered in arms on the slope of the hill gazed up towards him with that sort of expectation which is near akin to hope ; and the prompt rapidity of his gestures, the quickness with which he was speaking, the ease with which he seemed to comprehend every body, and the readiness and capability, if we may so call it, of his own demeanour, was marked by all those that looked upon him, and gave trust and confidence even to the faintest heart there.

“Where is Riquet?” the Count said, after speaking to some of the gentlemen who had taken arms; “where is Riquet? He told me that two persons had arrived from Paris last night, and were safe in his chamber. Where is Riquet?”

“Riquet! Riquet!” shouted several voices, sending the sound back into the castle; but in the mean time the Count went on speaking to those around them in a sorrowful tone.

“So poor Monsieur de l’Estang is dead!” he said. “That is a shining light, indeed, put out. He died yesterday evening you say—God forgive me that I should regret him at such a moment as this, and wish that he had been left to us. There was not a nobler or a wiser, or, what is the same thing, a better man in France. I have known him from my childhood, gentlemen, and you must not think me weak that I cannot bear this loss as manly as might be,” and he dashed a tear away from his eye. “That they should torture such a venerable form as that!” he added; “that they should stretch upon the rack him, who never pained or tortured any one! These things are too fearful, gentlemen, almost to be believed. The time will come when they shall be looked

upon but as a doubtful tale. Is it not six of our pastors, in Poitou alone, that they have broken on the wheel? Out upon them, inhuman savages! Out upon them! I say. But what was this you told me of some ladies having been freed from the prison? — Oh, here is Riquet. Now, sirrah, what are your tidings? Who are these personages from Paris?”

“One of them, Sir,” replied Riquet, whose tone was changed in no degree by the new situation in which he was placed, “one of them is your Lordship’s own man, or rather your Lordship’s man’s man, Peter. He is the personage that I left in Paris to give the order for your liberation that you wot of.”

“Ay!” said the Count; “what made him so long in following us? He was not detained, by any chance, was he?”

“Oh no, my Lord,” replied the valet, “he was not detained, only he thought—he thought—I do not know very well what he thought. But, however, he stayed for two or three days, and is only just come on hither.”

“Does he bring any news?” demanded the Count.

“None, but that the Prince de Conti is dead, very suddenly indeed, of the smallpox,

caught of his fair wife; that all Protestants are ordered to quit Paris immediately; and that the Duke of Berwick has made formal abjuration."

"I grieve for the Prince de Conti," said the Count, "he was promising and soldier-like; though the other, the young Prince de la Rochesur-Yon, is full of still higher qualities. So, the boy Duke of Berwick has abjured. That might be expected. No other news?"

"None, my Lord, from him," replied the man, who evidently was a little embarrassed in speaking on the subject of his fellow-servant; and he added immediately, "The other gentleman seems to have news; but he will communicate it to none but yourself."

"I will speak with them both," replied the Count. "Bring them hither immediately, Riquet."

"Why, my Lord," said the valet, "as to Peter, I do not well know where ——"

"You must know where, within three minutes," replied the Count, who, in general interpreted pretty accurately the external signs and symbols of what was going on in Riquet's heart. "You must know where, within three minutes, and that where must be here, by my side. Maître Riquet, remember, though some-

what indulgent in the saloon or the cabinet, I am not to be trifled with in the field. Now, gentlemen, what were we speaking of just now? Oh, these ladies. Have you any idea of what they were in prison for? Doubtless, for worshipping God according to their consciences. That is the great crime now. But I did not know that they had begun to persecute poor women;" and a shade of deep melancholy came over his fine features, as he thought of what might be the situation of Clémence de Marly.

"Why, it would seem, Sir," replied one of the gentlemen, "from what I can hear, that the ladies were not there as prisoners; but were two charitable persons of the town of Thouars, who had come to give comfort and consolation to our poor friend, Monsieur de l'Estang."

"God's blessing will be upon them," replied the Count, "for it was a noble and a generous deed in such times as these. But here comes Master Riquet, with our two newly arrived friends. Good heavens, my old acquaintance of the Bastille! Sir, I am very glad to see you free, and should be glad to see you in this poor province of Poitou, could we but give you any other entertainment than bullets and hard blows, and scenes of sorrow or of strife."

“No matter, no matter, my young friend,” replied the old Englishman; “to such entertainment I am well accustomed. It has been meat and drink to me from my youth; and though I cannot exactly say that I will take any other part in these transactions, being bound in honour, in some sense, not to do so, yet I will take my part in any dangers that are going, willingly. But do not let me stop you, if you are going to ask any questions of that fellow, who came the last five or six miles with me; for if you don’t get him out of the hands of that rascal of yours, there will be no such thing as truth in him in five minutes.”

“Come hither, Peter,” cried the Count. “Maître Riquet you have face enough for any thing; so stand here. Now, Peter, the truth at one word! What was it that Riquet was telling you not to tell me?”

“Why, my Lord,” replied the man, glancing his eye from his master to the valet, and the awe of the former in a moment overpowering the awe of the latter; “why, my Lord, he was saying, that there was no need to tell your Lordship that I never delivered the order that he gave me to deliver at the gates of the Bastille.”

The Count stood for a moment gazing on him thunderstruck. "You never delivered the order!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you never delivered the order he gave you for my liberation?"

"No, my Lord," replied the man, beginning to quake in every limb for fear that he had done something wrong. "I never did deliver the order. But I'll tell your Lordship why. I thought there was no use of delivering it, for just as I was walking up to do so, and had made myself look as like a courier of the court as I could, I saw you yourself going along the Rue St. Antoine, with two boys staring up in your face, and I thought I might only make mischief for myself or you if I went and said any thing more about the matter. When I knew you were free, I thought that was quite enough."

"Certainly, certainly," replied the Count; "but in the name of Heaven, then, by whom have I been delivered?"

"Why, my Lord, that is difficult to say," replied Riquet, "but not by that fellow who has brought me back the order as I gave it to him; and now — as very likely your Lordship would wish to know—I told him not to tell you, simply

because it would tease you to no purpose, and take away from me the honour of having set your Lordship free, without doing you any good."

"You are certainly impudent enough for your profession," replied the Count, "and in this instance as foolish as knavish. The endeavour and the risk were still the same, and it is for that I owe you thanks, not for the success or want of success."

"Ah, Sir," replied Riquet, "if all masters were so noble and generous, we poor valets should not get spoilt so early. But how you have been liberated, Heaven only knows."

"That's a mistake," replied the old English officer; "every body at the court of France knows. The King was in a liberating mood one week; and he himself gave an order for the Count's liberation one day, and for mine two days afterwards. I heard of it when I went to present myself before the King, and the whole court was ringing with what they called your ingratitude, Count; for by that time it was known on what errand you had set off hither."

The Count clasped his hands together, and looked down upon the ground. "I fear," he said a low voice, "that I have been sadly misled."

“Not by me, my Lord, upon my honour!” cried Riquet, with an earnest look. “I did my best to serve you, and to deliver you; and I fully thought that by my means it had been done. The man can tell you that he had the order from me : he can produce it now ——”

“I blame you not, Riquet,” said his master, “I blame you not ! you acted for the best ; but most unhappily has this chanced, to bring discredit on a name which never yet was stained. It is now too late to think of it, however. My part is chosen, and there is no retracting.”

“When on my visit to the court,” said the old English officer, “in order to return thanks for my liberation, and to demand certain acts of justice, I heard you blamed, I replied, my good Sir, that we in England held that private affections must never interfere with public duties ; and that doubtless you felt the part you had chosen to be a public duty. They seemed not to relish the doctrine there — nor you fully to feel its force, I think.”

“My dear Sir,” said the Count, “I have not time to discuss nicely all the collateral points which affect that question. All I will say is, that in following such a broad rule, there is much need to be upon our guard against one of

man's greatest enemies — his own deceitful heart ; and to make sure that, in choosing the seeming part of public duty, to be not as much influenced by private affections — amongst which I class vanity, pride, anger, revenge — as in adopting the opposite course."

"That is true, too ; that is true, too," replied the other. "Man puts me in mind of an ape I once saw, whose greatest delight was to tickle himself ; but if any one else tried to do it, he would bite to the bone. But I see you are about to march — and some of your people have got their troops already in motion. If you will allow me half an hour's conversation as we ride along, I shall be glad. I will get my horse, and mount in a minute."

"The horse that brought you here must be tired," replied the Count ; "my people have several fresh ones. Riquet, see that a horse be saddled quickly for — this gentleman. A strange piece of ignorance, Sir," he continued, "but I am still unacquainted with your name."

"Oh, Thomas Cecil, my good Count," replied the old officer, "Sir Thomas Cecil ; but I will go get the horse, and be with you in a moment."

The Count bowed his head, and while the Englishman was away, proceeded to conclude

all his arrangements for the march. In something like regular order, but still with evident symptoms of no long training in the severe rules of military discipline, the Count's little force began to march, and a great part thereof was winding down the hill when the old Englishman returned.

"That is a fine troop," he said, "just now getting into motion. If you had many such as that, you might do something."

"They are a hundred of my own Protestant tenantry and citizens," replied the Count. "They have all served under me long in the late war, and were disbanded after the Truce of twenty years was signed. There is not a braver or steadier handful in Europe ; and since I have been placed as I am, I make it a point to lead them at the head in any offensive operations on our part, and to follow with them in the rear in the event of retreat, which you see is the case now. You will let them precede us a little, and then we can converse at leisure."

Thus saying, he mounted his horse, and after seeing the little body, which he called his legion, take its way down the hill, he followed accompanied by Sir Thomas, with a small party of attendants fifty yards behind them.

“And now, my good Sir,” said the young nobleman, “you will not think me of scanty courtesy if I say that it may be necessary to tell me in what I can serve you; or, in fact, to speak more plainly, if I ask the object of your coming to my quarters, at once, as I am informed that the intendant of the province, with what troops he can bring together from Berry and Rouergue, forming altogether a very superior force to our own, is marching to attack us. If he can do so in our retreat, of course he will be glad to avail himself of the opportunity, especially as I have been led away from the part of the country which it is most easy to defend with such troops as ours, in order to prevent an act of brutal persecution which they were going to perpetrate on one of the best of men. Thus our time for conversation may be short.”

“Why, you have not let him surprise you, I hope?” exclaimed the old officer.

“Not exactly that,” replied the Count; “but we are come into a part of the country where the people are principally Catholic, and we find a difficulty in getting information. I am also obliged to make a considerable movement to the left of my real line of retreat, in order to prevent one of our most gallant fellows, and his

band of nearly three hundred men, from being cut off. He is, it is true, both brave and skilful, and quite capable of taking care of himself; but I am sorry to say grief and excitement have had an effect upon his brain, and he is occasionally quite insane, so that, without seeming to interfere with him too much, I am obliged, for the sake of those who are with him, to give more attention to his proceedings than might otherwise have been necessary."

The Count paused, and the old officer replied, in a thoughtful tone, "I am in great hopes, from what I hear, that you will find more mild measures adopted towards you than you anticipate. Are you aware of who it is that has been sent down to command the troops in this district, in place of the former rash and cruel man?"

"No," replied the Count, "but, from what I have heard during these last four days, I have been led to believe that a man of far greater skill and science is at the head of the King's troops. All their combinations have been so much more masterly, that I have found it necessary to be extremely cautious, whereas a fortnight ago I could march from one side of the country to the other without any risk."

“The officer,” replied Sir Thomas Cecil, “was raised to the rank of major-general for the purpose, and is, I understand, an old friend of yours, the Chevalier d’Evrans.”

The Count suddenly pulled up his horse, and gazed, for a moment, in the old man’s face. “Then,” said he, “the Protestant cause is ruined. — It is not solely on account of Louis d’Evrans’s skill,” he added, “that I say so: though if ever any one was made for a great commander he is that man; but he is mild and moderate, conciliating and good-humoured; and I have remarked that a little sort of fondness for mystery which he affects, — concealing all things that he intends in a sort of dark cloud, till it flashes forth like lightning, — has a very powerful effect upon all minds that are not of the first order. The only bond that has kept the Protestants together has been sharp and bitter persecution lately endured. If any one equally gentle and firm, powerful and yet conciliating, appears against us, I shall not have five hundred men left in two days.”

“And perhaps, Count,” said the old man, “not very sorry for it?”

The Count turned his eyes upon him, and looked steadily in his face for a moment.

“That, I think,” he said, “is hardly a fair question, my good friend. I believe you, Sir, from all I have seen of you, to be an upright and honourable man, and I have looked upon you as a sincere Protestant, and one suffering, in some degree, from your attachment to that faith. I take it for granted, then, that nothing which I have said to you this day is to be repeated.”

“Nothing, upon my honour,” replied Sir Thomas Cecil, frankly. “You are quite right in your estimation of me, I assure you. If I ask any question, it is for my own satisfaction, and because, Sir, I take an interest in you. Nothing that passes your lips shall be repeated by me without your permission; though I tell you fairly, and at once, that I am going very soon to the head quarters of the Chevalier d’Evrان, to fulfil a mission to him, which will be unsuccessful I know, but which must still be fulfilled. Will you trust me so far as this, Count? Will you let me know whether you really wish this state of insurrection to go on; or would not rather, if mild — I will not call them equitable — terms could be obtained for the Protestants of this district, that peace should be restored and a hopeless struggle ended?

I do not say hopeless," he continued, "at all to disparage your efforts; but ——"

"My dear Sir," replied the Count, "act as bluntly by me as you did in the Bastille, call the struggle hopeless if you will. There are not ten men in my little force who do not know it to be hopeless, and those ten are fools. The only choice left, Sir, to the Protestants of this district when I arrived here was between timid despair and courageous despair; to die by the slow fire of persecution without resistance, or to die with swords in our hands in a good cause. We chose the latter, which afforded, indeed, the only hope of wringing toleration from our enemies by a vigorous effort. But I am as well aware as you are that we have no power sufficient to resist the power of the crown; that in the mountains, woods, and fastnesses of this district and of Brittany, upon which I am now retreating, I might, perhaps, frustrate the pursuit of the royal forces, for months, nay, for years; living, for weeks, as a chief of banditti, and only appearing for a single day, from time to time, as the general of an army. Day by day my followers would decrease; for the scissars of inconvenience often shear down the forces of an insurgent leader more fatally than the sharp

sword of war. Then, a thousand to one, no means that I could take would prevent all my people from committing evil acts. I, and a just and holy cause, would acquire a bad name, and the whole would end by the worst of my people betraying me to death upon the scaffold. All this, Sir, was considered before I drew the sword; but you must remember that I had not the slightest idea whatsoever that the King had shown any disposition to treat me personally with any thing but bitter severity. — To return to your former question, then, and to answer it candidly and straight-forwardly, but merely remember between you and I, I should not grieve on such reasonable terms being granted to the generality of Protestants as would enable them to live peacefully, adhering to their own religion, though it be in private; to see my men reduced, as I have said, to five hundred, ay, or to one hundred: provided those gallant men, who, with firm determination, adhere to the faith of their fathers, and are resolved neither to conceal that faith nor submit to its oppression, have the means of seeking liberty of conscience in another land. As for myself," he continued, with a deep sigh, "my mind is at present in such a state that I should little care, if once I

saw this settled, to go to-morrow and lay my head at the foot of the King's throne. Abjure my religion I never will ; live in a land where it is persecuted I never will ; but life has lately become a load to me, and it were as well for all, under such circumstances, that it were terminated. This latter part of what I have said, Sir, you may tell the Chevalier d'Evran : namely that, on the Government granting such terms to the Protestants of this district as will insure the two objects I have mentioned, the Count of Morseiul is willing to surrender himself to the pleasure of the King ; though, till such terms are granted, and my people so secured, nothing shall induce me to sheath the sword : — and yet I acknowledge that I am bitterly grieved and mortified that this error has taken place in regard to the order for my liberation, and that thus an imputation of ingratitude has been brought upon me which I do not deserve."

The old officer held out his hand to him, and shook that of the Count heartily, adding with a somewhat profane oath, which characterises the English nation, " Sir, you deserve your reputation ! "

He went on a minute or two afterwards to say, " I have been accustomed, in some degree,

to such transactions; and I will report your words and nothing more: but, by your leave, I think you had better alter the latter part, and stipulate that you shall be allowed yourself to emigrate with a certain number of your followers. Louvois is extremely anxious to keep from the King's ears the extent of this insurrection, having always persuaded him that there would be none. He will, therefore, be extremely glad to have it put down without more noise on easy terms, and doubtless he has given the Chevalier d'Evran instructions to that effect."

"No, no," replied the Count; "I must endeavour, Sir, to wipe away the stain that has been cast upon me. Do you propose to go to the Chevalier's head quarters at once?"

"Not exactly," replied the old Englishman. "I am first going to Thouars, having some business with the Duc de Rouvré."

"Good God!" exclaimed the Count; "is the Duc du Rouvré at Thouars?" and a confused image of the truth, that Clémence de Marly had been one of the two persons found in the prison with Claude de l'Estang, now flashed on his mind. Ere the old man could reply, however, two of the persons who were following,

and who seemed to have ridden some way to the left of the direct road, rode up as fast as they could come, and informed the Count de Morseiul, that what seemed a large body of men, was marching up towards their flank by a path which ran up the hollow-way between them and the opposite hills.

The little force of the Count had by this time emerged from the woods, and was marching along the side of the hill, that gradually sank away into those *landes*, across which Armand Herval had, as we have seen, led Clémence de Marly. Up the valley, on the left, lay a deep ravine, bringing the cross road from Thouars into the road in which the Huguenots were, so that the flank of the Count's force was exposed to the approach of the enemy on that side, though it had somewhat the advantage of the ground. No other line, however, had been open for him, the country on the other side leading into tracts much more exposed to attack; and, in fact, on that morning no choice had been left but either to run the risk of what now appeared to have happened, or to leave Herval and his men to their fate, they not having joined the main force on the preceding day as they had been directed to do.

The Count instantly turned his horse's head, galloped to the spot from whence the men had seen the head of the enemy's column, paused for a single instant, in order, if possible, to ascertain their force, and then riding back, commanded the small troop, which he called his legion, to face about. While, by his orders, they traversed a piece of broken ground to the left, so as to approach a spot where the hollow-way debouched upon the open country, he sent five or six of his attendants with rapid orders to the different noblemen who were under his command, in regard to assuming a position upon the hill.

"Tell Monsieur du Bar," he said to one of the men, "to march on as quickly as possible till he reaches the windmill, to garnish that little wood on the slope with musketeers, to plant the two pieces of cannon by the mill so as to bear upon the road, to strengthen himself by the mill and the walls round it, and to hold that spot firm to the very last. Jean, bid the Marquis send off a man instantly to Herval, that he may join us with his Chauve-souris, and in the mean time ask him to keep the line of the hill from the left of Monsieur du Bar to the cottage on the slope, so that the enemy may not

turn our flank. If I remember right, there are two farm roads there, so that all movements will be easy from right to left, or from front to rear. As soon as Herval comes up, let the Marquis throw him forward, with his marksmen, to cover my movements, and then commence the general retreat by detachments from each flank, holding firm by the mill and the wood to the last; for they dare not advance while those are in our hands. I can detain them here for a quarter of an hour, but not longer. — Sir Thomas Cecil," he added, "take my advice, and ride off for Thouars with all speed. This will be a place for plenty of bullets, but no glory."

Thus saying, he galloped down to his troop; and in a moment after the old English officer, who stood with the utmost sang-froid to witness the fight, saw him charge into the hollow-way at the head of his men.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE AND THE RETREAT.

WE must now return to the small shepherds cottage in the *landes*; and, passing over the intervening day which had been occupied in the burial of the good pastor, we must take up the story of Clémence de Marly on the morning of which we have just been speaking. At an early hour on that day Armand Herval came into the cottage, where the people were setting before her the simple meal of ewe milk and black bread, which was all that they could afford to give; and, standing by her side with somewhat of a wild air, he asked her if she were ready to go. She had seen him several times on the preceding day, and his behaviour had always been so respectful, his grief for the death of Claude de l'Estang so sincere, and the emotions which he displayed at the burial of the body in the sand so deep and unaffected, that Clémence had conceived no slight confi-

dence in a man, whom she might have shrunk from with terror, had she known that in him she beheld the same plunderer, who, under the name of Brown Keroual, had held her for some time a prisoner in the forest near Auron.

“To go where, Sir?” she demanded, with some degree of agitation. “I knew not that I was about to go any where.”

“Oh, yes!” replied the man, in the same wild way. “We should have gone yesterday, and I shall be broke for insubordination. You do not know how stern he is when he thinks fit, and how no prayers or intreaties can move him.”

“Whom do you speak of, Sir?” demanded Clémence. “I do not know whom you mean.”

“Why, the General to be sure,” replied the man, “the Commander-in-Chief, — your husband — the Count de Morseiul.”

The blood rushed up into the cheek of Clémence de Marly. “You are mistaken,” she said; “he is not my husband.”

“Then he soon will be,” replied the man with a laugh; “though the grave is a cold bridal bed. — I know that, lady! — I know that full well; for when I held her to my heart on the day of our nuptials, the cheek that used to

feel so warm when I kissed it, was as cold as stone ; and when you come to kiss his cheek, or brow, too, after they have shot him, you will find it like ice — cold — cold — with a coldness that creeps to your very soul, and all the heat that used to be in your heart goes into your brain, and there you feel it burning like a coal.”

Clémence shuddered, both at the evident insanity of the person who was talking to her, and at the images which his words called up before her eyes. He was about to go on, but a tall, dark, powerful man came in from the cottage door where he had been previously standing, and laid hold of Herval's arm, saying, “Come, Keroual, come. You are only frightening the lady ; and, indeed, you ought to be upon the march. What will my Lord say ? The fit is upon him now, Madam,” he continued, addressing Clémence, “but it will soon go away again. They drove him mad, by shooting a poor girl he was in love with at the preaching on the moor, which you may remember. I am not sure, but I think you were there too. If I could get him to play a little upon the musette at the door, the fit would soon leave him. He used to be so fond of it, and play it so well. —

Poor fellow, he is terribly mad ! See how he is looking at us without speaking. — Come Keroual, come ; here is the musette at the door ;” and he led him away by the arm.

“ Ay,” said the old shepherd as they went out, “ one is not much less mad than the other. There, they ought both to have gone to have joined the Count last night. But the burying of poor Monsieur de l’Estang seemed to set them both off ; and now there are all the men drawn out and ready to march, and they will sit and play the musette there, Lord knows how long ! ”

“ But what did they mean by asking if I were ready ? ” said Clémence. “ Do they intend to take me with them ? ”

“ Why yes, Madam,” replied the old man ; “ I suppose so. The litter was ready for you last night, and as the army is going to retreat I hear, it would not be safe for you to stay here, as the Catholics are coming up in great force under the Chevalier d’Evrans.”

Clémence started and turned round, while the colour again rushed violently into her cheeks ; and then she covered her eyes with her hands, as if to think more rapidly by shutting out all external objects. She was roused, how-

ever, almost immediately, by the sound of the musette, and saying, "I will go! I am quite ready to go!" she advanced to the door of the cottage.

It was a strange and extraordinary sight that presented itself. Herval and Paul Virlay, dressed in a sort of anomalous military costume, and armed with manifold weapons, were sitting together on the stone bench at the cottage door, the one playing beautifully upon the instrument of his native province, and the other listening, apparently well satisfied; while several groups of men of every complexion and expression, were standing round, gazing upon the two, and attending to the music. The air that Herval or Keroual was playing was one of the ordinary psalm tunes in use amongst the Protestants, and he gave it vast expression; so that pleasure in the music and religious enthusiasm seemed entirely to withdraw the attention of the men from the madness of the act at that moment. Paul Virlay, however, was mad in that kind, if mad at all, which is anxious and cunning in concealing itself; and the moment he saw Clémence, he started up with somewhat of shame in his look, saying, —

"He is better now, Madam; he is better

now. Come, Herval," he continued, touching his arm, "let us go."

Herval, however, continued till he had played the tune once over again, and then laying down the musette, he looked in Virlay's face for a moment without speaking; but at length replied, —

"Very well, Paul, let us go. I am better now. Madam, I beg your pardon; I am afraid we have hurried you."

Even as he spoke a messenger came up at full speed, his horse in a lather of foam, and eagerness and excitement in his countenance.

"In the name of Heaven, Keroual, what are you about?" he cried. "Here is the Count and Monsieur du Bar engaged with the whole force of the enemy within two miles of you. In Heaven's name put your men in array, and march as fast as possible, or you will be cut off, and they defeated."

The look of intelligence and clear sense came back into Herval's countenance in a moment.

"Good God! I have been very foolish," he said, putting his hand to his head. "Quick, my men: each to his post: sound the conch

there. But the lady," he continued, turning to the man who had ridden up; "what can we do with the lady?"

"Oh, she must be taken with you, by all means," replied the man. "We can send her on from the cross road into the front. They will sweep all this country, depend upon it; and they are not men to spare a lady."

Clémence turned somewhat pale as the man spoke; and though, in fact, her fate was utterly in the hands of those who surrounded her, she turned an inquiring look upon Maria, who stood near, as if asking what she should do.

"Oh, go, lady! go!" cried the attendant, in a language which the men did not understand, but which Clémence seemed to speak fluently; and after a few more words she retired into the cottage, to wait for the litter, while the band of Brown Keroual, some on horseback and some on foot, began to file off towards the scene of action. In a few minutes after the litter appeared; but by this time two mules had been procured for it, and, with a man who knew the country well for their driver, Clémence and Maria set off with the last troop of the Huguenots, which was brought up by Herval himself. He was now all intelligence and ac-

tivity; and no one to see him could have conceived that it was the same man, whose mind but a few minutes before seemed totally lost. He urged on their march as fast as possible, pressing the party of foot which was attached to his mounted band; and in a few minutes after a sharp fire of musketry met the ear of Clémence as she was borne forward. This continued for a little time, as they passed round the edge of a low wood which flanked the hills on one side, and seemed the connecting link between the *landes* and the cultivated country. About five minutes after, however, louder and more rending sounds were heard; and it was evident that cannon were now employed on both sides. The voices of several people shouting, too, were heard, and a horse without a rider came rushing by, and startled the mules that bore the litter.

Clémence de Marly could but raise her prayers to God for his blessing on the right cause. It was not fear that she felt, for fear is personal. It was awe. It was the impressive consciousness of being in the midst of mighty scenes, which sometimes in her moments of wild enthusiasm she had wished to see, but which she now felt to be no matter for sport or curiosity.

Another instant she was out upon the side of the hill beyond the wood ; and the whole scene laid open before her. That scene was very awful, notwithstanding the confusion which prevented her from comprehending clearly what was going on. A large body of troops was evidently marching up the valley to the attack of the heights. A windmill surrounded by some low stone walls, not a hundred yards to the left of the spot where she was placed, appeared at the moment she first saw it one blaze of fire, from the discharge of musketry and cannon, which seemed to be directed, as far as she could judge, against the flank of a body of cavalry coming up a road in the valley. On the slope of the hill, however, to the right, a considerable body of infantry was making its way up to the attack of the farther angle of the wood, round which she herself had just passed ; and, from amongst the trees and brushwood, nearly stripped of their leaves as they were, she could see poured forth almost an incessant torrent of smoke and flame upon the assailing party, seeming almost at every other step to make them waver, as if ready to turn back.

The object, however, which engaged her principal attention was a small body of horse-

men, apparently rallying, and reposing for a moment, under shelter of the fire from the hill. Why she knew not, — for the features of none of those composing that party were at all discernible, — but her heart beat anxiously, as if she felt that there was some beloved being there.

The next instant that small body of men was again put in motion, and galloping down like lightning, might be seen, though half hidden by the clouds of dust, to hurl itself violently against the head of the advancing column, like an avelanche against some mighty rock. Almost at the same moment, however, an officer rode furiously up to Herval, and gave him some directions in a quick and eager voice. Herval merely nodded his head; then turned to the driver of the mules, and told him to make as much haste as he could towards Mortagne, along the high road.

“Remain with the head of the column,” he said; “and, above all things, keep your beasts to the work, for you must neither embarrass the march, nor let the lady be left behind.”

The man obeyed at once; but before he had left the brow of the hill, Clémence saw the band of Keroual begin to descend towards the small

body of cavaliers we have mentioned, while a company of musketeers, at a very few yards distance from her, began to file off as if for retreat.

All the confusion of such a scene succeeded, the jostling, the rushing, the quarrels, the reproaches, the invectives, which take place upon the retreat of an irregular force. But several bodies of better disciplined men taking their way along the road close to Clémence, preserved some order and gave her some protection ; and as they passed rapidly onward, the sounds of strife and contention, the shouts and vociferations of the various commanders, the rattle of the small arms and the roar of the artillery, gradually diminished ; and while Clémence hoped in her heart that the battle was over, she looked round for some one coming up from the rear to inquire for the fate of him for whom her heart had beat principally during that morning.

For about half an hour, however, nobody came, the retreat assumed the appearance of an orderly march, and all was going on tranquilly, when a horseman came up at a quick pace, and pulled in his charger beside the litter. Clémence looked towards him. It was not the

face that she expected to see, but, on the contrary, that of a tall, thin, hale old man, perfectly a stranger to her. He pulled off his hat with military courtesy, and bowed low.

"I beg your pardon, Madam," he said, "but I have just been informed of your name, quality, and situation, and also with the circumstances of your being brought from Thouars hither. I come to say," he added, lowering his voice and bending down, "that I am just going to visit an old friend, the Duke de Rouvré, who, I understand, is your guardian. Now, I do not know whether you are here of your own good will, or whether there be any degree of force in the matter. Should you, however, be disposed to send any message to the Duke, I am ready to take it."

"I give you many thanks, Sir," replied Clémence, "but, of course, I can send no long message now, nor detailed explanation of my situation. Assure him only, and the Duchess, who has been a mother to me, of my deep love, and gratitude, and respect."

"But shall I tell them," said the old man, "that you are here with your consent, or without your consent?"

"You may tell them," replied Clémence,

“ that I was brought here indeed without my consent, though being here I must now remain voluntarily. My fate is decided.”

“ Do you mean to say, Madam ? ” demanded the old gentleman, bluffly, “ that I am to tell them you are married ? That is the only way in general that a woman’s fate can be decided which I know of.”

“ No, Sir,” replied Clémence, colouring, “ there is in this country a different decision of one’s fate. I am a Protestant ! It must no longer, and it can no longer be concealed.”

A bright and noble smile came upon the old man’s countenance. “ I beg your pardon, Madam,” he said. “ I have spoken somewhat rudely, perhaps ; but I will deliver your message, and at some future time may ask your pardon, if you will permit me, for having called the colour into a lady’s cheek, a thing that I am not fond of doing, though it be beautiful to see.”

Thus saying, and bowing low, he was about to turn his horse and canter back again, when an eager look that lighted up Clémence’s features, made him pause even before she spoke, and ride on a little further beside her.

“ You came from the rear, Sir, I think,” she

said, in a low and faltering voice. "May I ask how has gone the day?—Is the Count de Morseiul safe?"

The old man smiled again sweetly upon her. "Madam," he said, "did not sad experience often show us that it were not so, I should think, from the fate of the Count of Morseiul this day, that a gallant and all daring heart is a buckler which neither steel nor lead can penetrate. I myself have sat and watched him, while in six successive charges he attacked and drove back an immensely superior force of the enemy's cavalry, charging and retreating every time under the most tremendous and well sustained fire of the light infantry on their flanks that ever I saw. Scarcely a man of his whole troop has escaped without wounds, and but too many are killed. The Count himself, however, is perfectly unhurt. I saw him five minutes ago bringing up the rear, and as by that time the enemy were showing no disposition to pursue vigorously, he may be considered as safe, having effected his retreat from a very difficult situation in the most masterly manner. Is there any one else, Madam, of whom I can give you information?"

“I fear not,” replied the lady. “There is, indeed, one that I would fain ask for; but as you have been with the Count de Morseiul, probably you do not know him. I mean the Chevalier d’Evrans.”

“What, both the commanders!” exclaimed the old gentleman, with a smile which again called the colour into Clémence’s cheek. “But I beg your pardon, Madam,” he added; “I have a better right to tell tales than to make comments. In this instance I cannot give you such accurate information as I did in the other, for I do not know the person of the Chevalier d’Evrans. But as far as this little perspective glass could show me, the gentleman who has been commanding the royal forces, and whom I was informed was the Chevalier d’Evrans, is still commanding them, and apparently unhurt. I discovered him by his philomot scarf, and sword knot, after losing sight of him for a time. But he was still upon horseback, commanding in the midst of his staff, and has the credit of having won the day, though the immense superiority of his forces rendered any other result out of the question, even if he had not acted as well and skilfully as he has done. I will now once more beg pardon for intruding upon you,

and trust that fair fortune and prosperity may attend you."

Thus saying, he turned and cantered away; and on looking round to her maid, Clémence perceived that Maria had drawn the hood of her grey cloak over her head.

CHAPTER X.

THE LOVER'S REUNION.

THE march was over, the pursuers left behind, and the Count of Morseiul had pitched his tents in a strong position, with some shepherds' huts and one or two cottages and farm-houses in the midst of his camp. A nunnery of no great extent, situated upon a little eminence, was within the limits of his position, and a small chapel belonging thereunto, nearly at the bottom of the hill, and commanding the passage of a stream and morass, was occupied by a strong body of his followers, under Herval and Virlay, while the Marquis du Bar, who had been slightly wounded in the course of that day's strife, insisted upon fixing his quarters on the most exposed side of the camp, where any attack was likely to take place.

No attempt had been made to take possession of the nunnery, as it was only occupied by women, and as the Count was aware that in

case of need, he could obtain entrance in a moment. At the same time he could fully depend not only upon the courage and firmness, but upon the vigilance of Du Bar, and he therefore looked upon his small force as completely in security. Provisions, too, had been found in abundance, and the people of the neighbouring country were somewhat better disposed towards the Huguenot cause, than those of the district which they had just left.

His men, however, had suffered tremendously, even in the brief struggle which had taken place with the overpowering force of the Catholics. Of his own troop, not more than thirty men were found capable of action at the end of that day, and, at least, one third of the whole Huguenot force was unfit for service. This was a lamentable prospect, as the insurgents had no points of strength to fall back upon, and had not the leaders been animated by the consciousness of having performed great actions in that day's contest and having held at bay the royal army with a force six times inferior in number, the proposal of dispersing and carrying on the warfare by desultory efforts in the woods, which was suggested in one of

their little councils, would certainly have been adopted.

In the mean time, however, the spirit of the men was kept up, and their resolution fortified, by the prayers and exhortations of the various ministers who accompanied the camp; and on going round to the different quarters just after nightfall, the Count found some bodies of the Protestants still engaged in their religious exercises, some just concluded, but all less depressed at heart than he was himself.

When he had done his round, he paused before the door of one of the farm-houses — the best and most comfortable — and dismissing the men who had followed, he turned to enter. There was a slight degree of hesitation, however, seemed to come over him as he did so, and he remained for some moments with his hand upon the latch. He at length raised it, and entered the kitchen of the farm-house, where the family of the proprietor were assembled round the ample hearth, on which was a full supply of blazing wood. At that very moment, speaking to the mistress of the house, was Clémence's attendant, Maria; but Clémence herself was not present, and on inquiring for her, the Count was told that she was in an upper

chamber, to which the woman immediately led him.

Albert of Morseiul followed her step by step, and when the door opened, he saw Clémence sitting at the table, with her head resting on her hand, and her eyes turned towards the fire; but with such a look of deep sadness and painful thought, as made his heart ache to see and to know that he could not change it.

“Here is the Count de Morseiul,” said the maid; and instantly Clémence started up, and turned towards the door, while the Count entered, and the maid retired. The face of Clémence de Marly assumed two or three different expressions in a moment. There was joy to see him, there was doubt, there was apprehension; but she advanced towards him at once, and the look of love was not to be doubted. He took the hands that she held out to him, he kissed them tenderly and often: but still there was deep sadness on his brow, as there was in his heart, and his first words were, “Oh, Clémence, at what a moment have you come to me at last!”

“Albert,” she said in reply, “I have much to say to you. Since I have been here, and seen what I have seen, I have found many ex-

cuses for your conduct; and I have learned to think that what I wrote briefly I may have written harshly and unkindly, and to blame myself as much, nay more than you: believing, though I had no time to explain why I could not come at the moment as I could have wished, yet, that I should still have added, such words as might show you that I was yours unchanged, however much I might judge that you had acted rashly, unadvisedly, and unlike yourself. I have determined to tell you all this at once, Albert, and, acknowledging that I blame myself, to shelter myself from all reproaches on your part in your kindness and generosity."

"Thanks, thanks, dearest Clémence," replied the Count, pressing her to his heart; "this is, indeed, balm after such a day as this: but I think, my Clémence, when you hear all, you will yourself exculpate me from blame, — though I fear that the charge of ingratitude which others may bring against me, will never be done away in the less generous minds of the world in general, without a terrible sacrifice. You I know, Clémence, will believe every word I tell you."

"Oh, every word!" she exclaimed; "to doubt you, Albert, were to doubt truth itself."

“Well, then, believe, Clémence,” he said, “when I tell you, that till this morning, — till this very morning, — I had not the slightest idea whatsoever that my liberation was attributable to the King. Not only I, but all my domestics, every attendant that I have, my man Riquet himself, all believed that it was through an artifice of his that I had been set at liberty. Had I thought otherwise, upon my word, my first act would have been to fly to Versailles, to express my thanks, whatever my after conduct might have been.”

He then explained to her every thing that had taken place, and the mistake under which he had himself laboured throughout.

“What confirmed me in the belief that the whole of Riquet’s story was perfectly correct,” he said, “was the fact that Besmaux, when he set me at liberty, observed that the order under which he did it, was not quite in the usual form, together with some remarks that he made upon there being no carriage sent for me with the order.”

“Alas ! alas !” cried Clémence, wringing her hands, “it was my weakness ; it was my foolish fears and anxiety, that produced all this mischief. Listen to my tale now, Albert, and forgive me, forgive me for what I have done.”

She then related to her lover almost all that had taken place between the King, herself, and Madame de Maintenon. We say almost, because she did not relate the whole ; but though Albert of Morseiul saw it, he divined from what she did tell, that there were matters which she was bound not to divulge. Perhaps he divined the important truth itself, and at all events he did not love her a bit the less for a concealment which had no want of confidence in it.

“On the following morning,” she said, “at the hour that the King had appointed, I did not fail to be in attendance. I found him writing; but it was soon over, and he handed me the paper, saying, “There, lady, we have judged the cause that you have at heart as favourably as you judged ours last night. Tell him,” he added, “when you see him, that — though we cannot alter the strict laws, which we have found it necessary to make, for his sake — we will grant him all that may reasonably make him happy, either in our own land, or in another !”

“And I have borne arms against him,” cried the Count, clasping his arms together.

“Yet hear me out, Albert,” continued Clémence, “for the fault is mine. The order was for your immediate liberation. I took it eagerly,

thanked the King, and retired, well knowing that it ought to be countersigned by Louvois, and sent through his office. But during the evening before, on the occasion of something that was said, he gave me such a fiend-like look of revenge, that I knew he would seek your destruction, if not mine. I was well aware, too, that in many an instance he has interrupted the King's clemency, or his bounty; and weakly, most weakly, I sent the order without his signature — ay, and without a moment's delay, by a servant belonging to the Duc de Rouvré. Thus, thus it was, that I, in my eagerness for your safety, have plunged you into new dangers, — dangers from which, alas! I fear that there is scarcely a possible means of escape.

The Count looked down upon the ground for a moment, and he then replied, “I will write to the King myself, Clémence. It is very possible that he will not even read the letter of a rebel with arms in his hand. But still it will be a satisfaction to me to do so. I must first get to the sea side, however, in order that I may place poor Riquet in security, for were the tale told and he afterwards discovered, I fear that no tortures would be considered too horrible to punish the daring act that he committed.”

“ I, too, will write,” replied Clémence. “ I will write and tell the whole to one, who, though she will refuse at first, I know, to do any thing in our behalf, yet will not fail, calmly and quietly, to labour in our favour, thinking that she owes something to me. I will tell her the whole; I will tell her distinctly, Albert; and if you will procure it for me I will send her even the forged order that you mention, with the attestation of the man who brought it back from Paris.”

Albert of Morseiul pressed her to his heart, and she added, “ At all events, Albert, we shall be able to fly. We are now not far from the sea; ships can easily be procured, and we may be happy in another land.”

Albert of Morseiul kissed her cheek for his only reply: but his heart was sad, and he could scarcely command even a smile to countenance the false hope she had expressed. His own determinations were taken, his own resolutions formed; but he thought it better and more kind not to make them known to Clémence de Marly till the moment arrived for putting them in execution.”

While they were yet speaking, the attendant again came into the room to inform the Count

that three persons waited below to see him, and on going down he found Riquet, with one of the Protestants attached to the Marquis du Bar, and a gentleman, who appeared to be an inferior officer in the royal service. The two latter instantly stepped forward when he appeared.

“Monsieur du Bar,” said the Protestant soldier, “has sent you this gentleman, bearing a flag of truce, from the Chevalier d’Evrان. He carries a letter to yourself, and a letter to the lady from Thouars.”

The Count bowed to the stranger, and begged to see the letter to himself. It was simply addressed to the Count de Morseiul, and he opened it with some emotion, for it was strange to see the hand of Louis d’Evrان, writing to him as from one adversary to another. The style and tone of the letter, however, though it was very short, were precisely as if nothing had occurred to interrupt their intimacy, or array them hostilely against each other. It ran —

“DEAR ALBERT,

“I write to you simply to know whether I am to regard the communication made to me, on your part, by an English gentleman,

called Sir Thomas Cecil, as formal and definitive, as I must be made aware of that fact before I can transmit it to the court. I trust and hope that good results may proceed from it: but you must not forget that it is an awful risk. For my part I will do my best to quiet the province with as little harshness as possible, and with that object I accepted, or rather may say, solicited this command. In every respect, however, my duty must be done to the King, and shall be so done to the utmost. You never in your life fought better than you did this morning. Your defence of the heights was quite a Turenne affair; but you made a mistake in your morning movement to the left, which showed me your flank. Perhaps, however, you had some reason for it, for I think there was a fresh corps came up towards the close of the affair. Look to yourself, dear Albert, for be you sure that I shall give you no breathing time; and so God speed you!

“ LOUIS D'ÉVRAN.

“ Post Scriptum. I find myself called upon by my duty, to require you formally to send back la belle Clémence to her good friend de Rouvré, and to address a letter to her upon the subject of her return.”

The Count had read this epistle with a thoughtful and a somewhat frowning brow. It was quite characteristic of the Chevalier d'Evran, but yet there was something in it that did not please him. He turned, however, to the officer courteously, saying, —

“The Chevalier d'Evran notifies to me, that he has sent a letter to Mademoiselle de Marly, and seems to leave it to me to deliver it. I would rather, however, that you did so yourself, if that lady will permit me to introduce you to her, when you can bear her answer from her own mouth. Riquet,” he said, “go up and inquire, whether Mademoiselle de Marly will grant this gentleman a few minutes' audience.”

A short pause ensued: for Clémence hesitated for some time. At length, however, Riquet returned with an answer in the affirmative, and the Count led the officer to her presence.

“I am commanded, Madame,” said the stranger, “by Monsieur le Chevalier d'Evran, lieutenant-general of the province, to deliver you this letter, and to say, that, at any time to-morrow which you will name, he will send a proper carriage and attendants, to convey you back to the town of Thouars, from which he understands

that you were forcibly carried away, some night ago."

Clémence merely bowed her head, and held out her hand for the letter, which she opened and read. A faint smile came over her countenance as she proceeded, and when she had done, she handed the epistle to her lover, asking, "What shall I do or say?"

"Nay, I can give you no advice," replied the Count. "In this matter, Clémence, you must act by your own judgment: advice from me, situated as you are now, would bear somewhat the character of dictation. Do you wish me to read the letter?"

"Certainly," she replied. "My mind will be easily made up as to the answer."

The Count then proceeded to read the letter, which was merely one of form; and began —

"MADEMOISELLE,

"I am urged by Monsieur le Duc de Rouvré, and feel it a part of my duty, to apply to you immediately to return to the care and protection of that gentleman and the Duchess, under whose charge and guardianship you have been placed by the King. Although we are fully informed that you were carried away from the town of

Thouars without your own consent and approbation, we feel sure, from the high character and reputation of the Count de Morseiul, though now unfortunately in open rebellion, that he will be most anxious you should return, and will do all that he can to facilitate the arrangements for that purpose. Such being the case, let me exhort you, Mademoiselle, to make all haste to quit the camp of a body of men in open insurrection, and to place yourself under the protection of legitimate authority.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Mademoiselle,

“ Your devoted servant,

“ LOUIS D'EVAN.”

The Count returned the letter with no other comment than, “ It is strange;” and Clémence paused for a moment, gazing upon the back of the letter, but evidently occupied by deep thoughts.

She then turned to the officer, who had remained standing, and said, “ I will not detain you, Sir, to write, as my answer must be merely what the Chevalier d'Evran expects. You will inform him — notwithstanding that it may seem bold of me to say so — that although

I was certainly not brought here with my consent, I, nevertheless, am here by my consent ; and as I have long been disposed to return to that faith in which I was originally instructed, and have for some time embraced it upon sincere conviction, I cannot consent to place myself in a situation where the exercise of the reformed religion will be denied to me ; but must, on the contrary, remain with those who will protect and support me in my adherence to what I consider the only pure and true faith."

" In short, Madam," replied the officer, " I am to tell the Chevalier that you are a Huguenot ?"

" Exactly, Sir," replied Clémence ; " and that I have been so for some time."

The officer showed an inclination to pause, and to add something to what had been said ; but the Count stopped him.

" You are, Sir," he said, " I think but the bearer of a letter ; nothing in that has been shown us giving you at all the title of an envoy. You have, therefore, but to bear back the reply which this lady has given."

" And your own, Sir," said the officer, " which I have not received."

" It is as simple as her own, Sir," replied the

Count. "Assure the Chevalier d'Evran of my best regard; tell him he may trust entirely and fully to the proposal made to him on my part, to which he alludes, as far at least as I myself am concerned. In respect, however, to what will satisfy the other leaders, who are in arms for the maintenance of their just liberties, and for the attainment of immunity in worshipping God according to their own consciences, he must deal with themselves. In that I cannot, and do not interfere, and have only to support them with my sword and counsels till such time as they have obtained their rights, or are satisfied with any arrangement proposed."

"I shall not fail," replied the officer, "to convey these messages distinctly;" and thus saying, he bowed, and left the room, followed by the Count of Morseiul, who, giving directions that his eyes should be properly bandaged, placed him in the hands of the Protestant soldier who had accompanied him, and of the guard which was waiting without. He then made a sign to Riquet to follow him up stairs, and bade his valet repeat to Clémence de Marly all that had occurred respecting his liberation from the Bastille.

"And now, Riquet," he said, when the man

had given a much more straight-forward and decided statement than he usually made, "it is my intention, as soon as possible, to lay the whole of these facts before the King, feeling it due to my own honour to show him that I have not been so ungrateful as he thinks. As the act, however, which you have committed might prove very dangerous to you, if you should fall into the hands of the Catholic party, I shall take care, before I give this account, that you have an opportunity of seeking refuge in another land. I know that all countries are to you alike: and I will ensure that you shall be provided with full means of obtaining for yourself comfort and repose."

"Sir," said the man, with some feeling, "all countries, as you say, are to me alike. But such is not the case with regard to all masters. Please God, I will never serve another but yourself. If you quit the country, I will quit it with you: if you remain, I will remain. I am already—am I not?—in arms against the crown. I am just as much a rebel riding after you from place to place, and every now and then firing a musket when I think nobody sees me, as if I were at the head of the whole business, and people called it the rebellion of Riquet.

You may therefore lay the whole statement before the King if you please, and I will myself write down the plain facts, in fewer words than a paper drawn up by a notary's clerk without a fee. I have no fear, Sir, of gathering together upon my shoulders a few more stray crimes and misdemeanours. That does not lie in the way of my cowardice. My neck is thin and long, and whether it be the axe or the cord that has to do with it, it will neither give the cord nor the edge much trouble; while I have always one consolation, which is, that if the experiment of hanging should prove disagreeable, it cannot be tried upon me twice. I will go and get the paper directly, Sir, which the man, Peter, brought back again. I will put down all his sayings and doings, and all my own; and the King, who is said to have a high taste in all branches of skill, ought to declare when he sees the order for your liberation which I manufactured, that there is not a piece of mosaic like it in all Versailles, and grant me a high reward for such a specimen of dexterity in my art."

"I fear, you deceive yourself, Riquet," replied the Count; but the man shook his head. "No, Sir, I do not," he said, "I assure you.

All things considered and well weighed, I do not think that I run a bit more risk by this matter being told to the King, than if it never reached his ears."

Thus saying he left the room, and Albert of Morseiul turned to other and sweeter thoughts. "Dear, dear Clémence," he said, gazing tenderly upon her, "you have now, indeed, chosen your part as I could expect Clémence to do, and by the words that you have this day spoken, you have swept away every feeling in my bosom that could give me a moment's pain."

"Hush, Albert, hush," said Clémence. "I know the kind of pain to which you allude. But you should never have entertained it. Love, Albert, — the love of a heart such as yours, ought never to doubt."

"But, dear Clémence," replied the Count, "is it possible for love to be satisfied while there is any thing touching its affection concealed?"

Clémence smiled, but shook her head; and as she was about to reply, a single musket shot was heard disturbing the tranquillity which had fallen over the camp. The Count listened, and his ear caught the distant sounds of "Alerte ! Alerte !" followed almost immediately after-

wards by a more general discharge of musketry. Clémence had turned very pale.

“Fear not, dear Clémence,” he said, “this is merely a night attack upon some of our quarters which will soon be repelled, for I have taken sufficient precautions. I will see what it is, and return immediately.”

Thus saying he left her, and Clémence, with a heart full of strong and mingled emotions, leaned her head upon the little table and wept.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

PARTICULAR orders had been issued by the Count de Morseiul that no offence should be given to the religious feelings of the Catholics; and, in issuing his commands for the occupation of the little chapel at the bottom of the hill, he had directed that the building appropriated to the ceremonies of the church should not be entered, except in case of necessity; the porch and the sacristy being taken possession of, and the piece of consecrated ground around it, which was strongly walled, affording a sort of fort, in which the men constructed huts, or set up their tents.

They were accustomed, indeed, to abide in the forest, and found no difficulty or discomfort in taking their night's rest where they were. Three fine spreading yew trees, of unknown age and immense thickness, afforded a pleasant shelter to many; and wine, which had been found plentifully in the hamlet above, as well

as in a little town at no great distance, flowed liberally amongst a body of men who had fought hard and marched long since the morning.

There was a great difference, however, to be remarked between them and the religious insurgents of more northern countries; for though both the sterner fanaticism which characterised Scotland and England not long before, and the wilder imaginations and fanciful enthusiasms of the far south were occasionally to be found in individuals, the great mass were entirely and decidedly French, possessing the character of light, and somewhat thoughtless gaiety, so peculiar to that indifferent and laughter-loving nation.

Thus, though they had prayed earnestly, after having fought with determination in the cause which to them was the cause of conscience, they were now quite ready to forget both prayer and strife, till some other cause should re-produce the enthusiasm which gave vigour to either.

They sat in groups, then, round fires of an old apple tree or two which they had pulled down, and drank the wine — procured, it must be acknowledged, by various different means; but though they sang not, as perhaps they might have done under other circumstances, nothing

else distinguished them from any other party of gay French soldiers carousing after a laborious day.

Herval and Virlay, as the commanders of that peculiar body, had taken possession of the little sacristy, and made themselves as comfortable therein as circumstances admitted. They were both somewhat inclined to scoff at, and do dishonour to every thing connected with the ceremonies of the church of Rome; but the commands of the Count were still sufficiently potent with them to prevent them from indulging such feelings; and they remained conversing both over the events of the day, and also over past times, without any farther insult to the Roman Catholic faith than merely a scornful glance towards the vestments of the priests, the rich purple and lace of which excited their indignation even more than many articles of faith.

Several hours of the evening had thus worn away, and their conversation, far from being like that of their men without, was sad, dark, and solemn. The proximity of the convent had recalled to the mind of Herval the situation of her he had loved; and though they talked much of her fate, yet by some peculiar acci-

dent, which we shall not attempt to explain, that subject, dark and painful as it was, did not disturb his mental faculties as might have been expected. It produced, however, both on him and on Virlay, that dark and profound gloom, from which actions of a fierce and cruel nature more frequently have birth, than even from the keen and active excitement of strife and anger.

“ Ay, and your child, too, Virlay,” said Herval: “ it is strange, is it not, that we have not yet found her? I should not wonder if she were in this very convent, up here upon the hill. The Count will not surely want you to leave it unsearched, when we march to-morrow.”

“ It matters little whether he do or not,” replied Virlay. “ Search it I will; and that as soon as it be grey day-light. My child I will have, if she be in France: and, oh, Herval, how often, when we are near a monastery or a convent, do I long to put a torch to the gate of it, and burn it all to the ground !”

“ No, no,” replied Herval, “ that would not do; you would be burning the innocent with the guilty.”

“ Ay, true,” answered Virlay, “ and thus I might burn my own poor child.”

“ Ay, or my Claire,” replied Herval, — “ that

is to say, if she had been living, poor thing ! You know they shot her, Paul. They shot her to the heart. But as I was saying, you might burn your own poor child, or the child of many a man that loves his as well as you do yours."

"I wonder if she be in there," said Paul Virlay. "Why should I not take ten or twelve men up, and make them open the gates and see?"

"Better wait till day," replied Herval; "better wait till day, Virlay. They have thousands of places that you might miss in the night. Hark ! some one knocked at the door — Who is it ? Come in !"

"Only a poor old woman," replied a voice from without, half opening the door, "only a poor old woman soliciting charity and peace;" and a minute after, with timid and shaking steps, a woman, dressed in a grey gown like the portress of some convent, gradually drew herself within the doorway, and crossed herself twenty times in a minute, as she gazed upon the two Protestants sitting with the gloom of their late conversation still upon their faces.

"What do you want, old woman?" said Herval sharply. "Don't you know that you risk a great deal by coming out at this hour? My

men are not lambs, nor wood pigeons, nor turtle doves."

"Oh, Heaven bless you, Sir, I know that," replied the old lady, "and in a great fright I am too: but after all I'm the least in a fright in the convent; and Sister Bridget — when she came to me with her teeth chattering in her head just after the men had come round and knocked at the door, and swore they would burn the place to the ground before morning — she talked so much about my courage, that I thought I had some, and agreed to come down; and then when she had got me out, she locked the wicket, and vowed I should not come in till I had been down to do the errand. So I came quietly on, and through the little gate, and got out of the way of the great gate, because I saw there were a number of fires there; and when I saw a light under the sacristy door, I said to myself, the officers will be in there, and they will be gentler and kinder. ——"

"Well, and what was your errand when you did come?" demanded Herval sharply.

"Why, Sir," replied the old woman, "we have a young lady amongst us —" Paul Vir-
lay started suddenly on his feet — "and a sweet

young lady she is too," continued the poor old nun, "as sweet a young lady and as pretty as ever I set my eyes on, and she told our good lady mother, the superior ——"

"What is her name, woman?" cried Paul Virlay, advancing upon the poor sister who retreated before him, but who still, with woman's intuitive tact in such things, saw that she had got the advantage. "What is her name, woman? It is my child! Oh, Herval, it is my child!"

"So she said to my lady mother," continued the good nun, as soon as she could make her voice heard; "so she said to my lady mother, that she was sure that if her father was in the Count of Morseiul's camp, he would come up in a minute with a guard of men to protect the convent — especially if he knew that we had been kind and good to her."

"Where is she? — Take me to her," cried Paul Virlay. "Woman, take me to my child. — I will bring a guard, — I will protect you. Where is my poor Margette?"

"Are you her father, then, Sir?" demanded the old woman. "Is your name Monsieur Virlay?"

"Yes, yes, yes," cried he impetuously: "I am Paul Virlay, woman."

"Then, Sir," she replied, "if you will bring up a guard and undertake to protect the convent, you can have the young lady, only pray ——"

"I will take a guard," cried he; "do not be afraid, woman! Nobody shall hurt you. I will take a guard," he continued speaking to Herval, as if in excuse for taking away part of the men from an important post, "I will take a guard for fear there should be men up there, and they should want to keep Margette. The Count said, too, that the only reason he did not occupy the convent was, that he did not like to disturb the nuns. Now, when they ask it themselves, I may well go. You can send for me in a moment if I be wanted."

"There is no fear of that," replied Herval; "go, in God's name, and see your child."

Paul Virlay hastened away, drawing the old woman by the arm after him, while Herval remained behind shaking his head, with a melancholy motion, and saying, "He will see his child again, and she will cling round his neck and kiss his cheek, and they will be happy:

but I shall never see my poor Claire, as long as I linger on upon this dull world." He paused, and leaning his head upon his hand, plunged into melancholy thought.

There was a little bustle without, while Vir-lay chose out such men as he thought he could best depend upon, and then, that part of the camp did not exactly sink into tranquillity, but the general noise of the party was less. There was still loud talking amongst the men, and wine seemed to have done its work too, as in one or two instances, especially near the little sacristy, where the wilder and less tractable of Herval's band had been placed to be under his own eye, the psalms with which the evening had begun had deviated into gayer songs; and he sat and listened gravely, while one of the men near the door carolled to his comrades a light ditty.

SONG.

In the deep woods when I was young,
Sly the happy, happy sunshine stole,
Under the green leaves, where the birds sung,
And merry, merry music filled the whole;
For Mary sat there,
And all her care
Was to outsing the linnet, — Dear little soul!

Through the long grass, then would I steal,
In music and sunshine to have my part.
That no one was coming, seemed she to feel,
Till the warm kiss, made the sweet maid start.
Then would she smile,
Through her blushes the while,
And vow she did not love me, — Dear little heart !

The sunshine is stealing still through the trees,
Still in the green woods the gay birds sing,
But those leaves have fall'n by the wintry breeze,
And many birds have dropped, that were then on the wing,
All, all alone,
Beneath the cold stone,
Lies my sweet Mary ! — Poor little thing !

Herval wept bitterly. It was one of the songs of his own youth, which he had himself sung in many a joyous hour : a song which was the master-key to visions of early happiness, and touching in its light emptiness upon all the most painful themes of thought. The song, the dear song of remembered happiness, sung at that moment of painful bereavement, was like a soldier's child springing to meet its father returning from the wars, and unconsciously plunging the arrow head deeper into the wound from which he suffered.

As he thus sat and wept, he was suddenly roused by the sound of a single musket shot at

no great distance, and starting up, he listened, when loud cries from the other side of the chapel caught his ear, and he rushed out. All was dark; not a star was in the sky; but the air was free from vapour, and looking towards the spot from which the sounds proceeded, he could see a dark body moving rapidly along the side of the hill, beyond the enclosure round the chapel. The shot that had been fired was not returned, and hurrying up to the spot as fast as possible, he clearly distinguished a column of infantry marching along at a quick pace in that direction, and evidently seeking to force its way between the convent and the chapel. There was none but a single sentry in that direction — the man who had discharged his musket — and Herval exclaimed in agony, “ Good God, how is this? They have been suffered to pass the morass and the stream !”

“ I fired as soon as I saw them,” replied the man; “ but Virlay carried off all the men from down below there, and marched them up to the convent.”

Herval struck his clenched hand against his brow, exclaiming, “ Fool that I was to suffer him !” Then rushing back as fast as possible, he called all the rest of his troop to arms, and with

the mere handful that assembled in a moment, rushed out by the gate through which the portress of the convent had entered, and attempted to cast himself in the way of the head of the enemy's column.

It was in vain, however, that he did so. A company of light infantry faced about, and met his first furious attack with a tremendous fire, while the rest of the force moved on. The sound, however, of the combat thus commenced, roused the rest of the camp, and the Count of Morseiul, himself on foot, and at the head of a considerable body of the most determined Huguenots, was advancing, ere five minutes were over, not to repel the attack of the enemy—for by what he saw, Albert of Morseiul instantly became aware, that, his camp being forced at the strongest point, it was in vain to hope that the King's army could be repulsed—but at least to cover the retreat of his troops with as little loss as possible.

All the confusion of a night combat now took place, the hurrying up by the dull and doubtful light; the cowardice that shows itself in many men when the eye of day is not upon them; the rashness and emotion of others, who indeed are not afraid, but only agitated; the mistakes

of friends for foes, and foes for friends ; the want of all knowledge of which party is successful in those points where the strife is going on at a distance.

As far as it was possible in such circumstances, Albert of Morseiul restored some degree of order and regularity to the defence. Relying almost altogether upon his infantry, he held the royalists in check, while he sent orders to some of the inferior commanders to evacuate the camp in as orderly a manner as possible, gathering the horse together upon the brow of the hill, so as to be ready when the occasion served to charge and support the infantry. His particular directions were despatched to Monsieur du Bar to maintain his post to the last, as the Count well knew that the forces of the Chevalier d'Evran were sufficient to attack the Huguenot camp on both sides at once.

Such, indeed, had been the plan of the Chevalier ; but it was not followed correctly. He had placed himself at the head of the attack upon the side of the convent, as by far the most hazardous and difficult. The officer who commanded the other attack was a man of considerable skill, but he had with him the Intendant of the province ; a personage as weak and pre-

sumptuous as he was cruel and bigoted: and insisting upon it, that the officer at the head of the troops had made a mistake in regard to the way, he entangled him in the morass, and delayed him for more than an hour.

Had the attack on that side succeeded, as well as that on the side of the chapel, the little force of the Huguenots must have been absolutely annihilated, and had the attack there even commenced at the same time that it began on the other side, the disasters of that night must have been tenfold greater than they proved. As it was, the Count de Morseiul had time to offer at least some resistance, and to organise his retreat. A horse was soon brought to him, and perceiving by the firing on the flank of the enemy's column, that Herval and his men were striving desperately to retrieve the error which had been committed, he called up a small body of horse, and making a gallant charge at their head, drove back some of the infantry companies that interposed between himself and the chapel, and opened a communication with Herval and the men. Giving orders to the officer in command of the horse to make another rapid charge, but not to entangle his men too far, the Count himself rode down to Herval, to

ascertain what was proceeding in that quarter. He found the man covered with blood and gunpowder, raging like a wolf in the midst of a flock.

“Herval,” he exclaimed, “a great mistake has been committed. A handful of men could have defended that bridge against an army.”

“I know it, Count, I know it,” replied Herval. “I have been a fool, Virlay has been a madman. I should never have trusted him by himself. It is time I should die.”

“It is rather time, Herval,” replied the Count, “that you should live and exert your good sense to remedy what is amiss. Do you not see that by spending your strength here you are doing no good, and losing your men every minute? Gather them together: quick, and follow me. We want support, there, upon the hill. The chapel is untenable now. Quick; lose not a moment. Good God!” he said, “they are not charging as I ordered, and in another moment we shall be cut off!”

It was indeed as he said. The young officer, to whom he had given the command, was shot through the head at the very moment that he was about to execute it. The charge was not made; the body which had been driven

back by the Count were rallied by the Chevalier d'Evran; the infantry of the Huguenots, which had been guarding the heights, wavered before the superior force brought against them; and by the time that Herval's men were collected, a large body of foot interposed between the Count de Morseiul and the spot where he had left his troops. Nothing remained but to lead round Herval's little force by the hollow-way on the edge of the morass, and climbing the steeper part of the hill, by the road that led to the little hamlet and farm houses, to rejoin the principal body of the Protestants there, and to make one more effort to hold the hamlet against the advancing force of the royalists, till Monsieur du Bar had time to draw off his troops.

Ere the Count, however, could reach the ground where he had fixed his own head quarters, both the infantry and cavalry, which he had left, had been driven back, and, by a terrible oversight, instead of retiring upon the hamlet, had taken the way to the right, along which the other bodies of troops had been ordered to retreat. The royalists thus, at the time that the Count arrived, were pouring in amongst the cottages and farm houses, and when he reached the little knoll immediately be-

hind the house, where he had left Clémence de Marly, he was instantly assailed by a tremendous fire from behind the walls of the court yard, and the lower windows of the house itself. He had no troops with him but Herval's band, and a small body of foot which arrived at that moment to his assistance from the Marquis du Bar, and he paused for an instant in agony of heart, knowing and feeling that it was utterly hopeless to attempt to retake the farmhouse, and enable Clémence to effect her escape. The grief and pain of a whole life seemed summed up in that one moment.

"I will not," he cried, in the rashness of despair, "I will not leave her without an effort."

Herval was by his side. "Sir," he said, "I must not live over this night. Let us advance at all risks."

The Count gave the order, and the men advanced gallantly, though the enemy's fire was terrible. They were actually scaling the wall of the court-yard, when suddenly a fire was opened upon them from the houses and walls on either side. Herval fell over amidst the enemy, the Count's horse dropped at once under him, and he felt himself drawn forcibly out

from beneath the dying animal, and carried along by the men in full retreat from that scene of slaughter.

“ Here is a horse, Count, — here is a horse,” cried a voice near him. “ Mount, quick, and oh take care of my poor girl. She is on with the troops before. I have lost you the battle, and know what must come of it.”

The Count turned and saw Paul Virlay by his side; but before he could reply the man left the bridle in his hand, and rushed into the midst of the enemy.

Springing on the charger's back the Count gazed round him. Herval's band was all in confusion; but beginning to rally upon the body of infantry sent by Du Bar. The hamlet was in full possession of the enemy: the only means of communication between Du Bar and the troops that were retreating was along the hill side. Albert of Morseiul saw that if he did not maintain that line, his gallant friend would be cut off, and, for the moment, casting from his mind all the other bitter anxieties that preyed upon it, he hastened to occupy a little rising ground, terribly exposed, indeed, to the enemy's fire, but which would protect the flank of his friend's little corps; while they joined the rest who were

in retreat. That he was just in time was proved to Albert of Morseiul, by the sound of a loud cannonade, which commenced from the very direction of Du Bar's quarters; and, sending that officer orders to retreat directly, he remained, for twenty minutes, repelling every charge of the enemy; and, by the example of his own desperate courage and perfect self-command, seeming to inspire his men with resolution unconquerable. In the mean time the Marquis du Bar retreated before the other body of royalists which had now come up, and having seen his men in comparative safety, rode back, with a small body of horse, to aid the Count in covering the retreat. The royalists now, however, had gained their object; the camp of the Huguenots was in their hands; the slaughter on both sides had been dreadful, considering the short space of time which the strife had lasted; the country beyond was difficult and defensible, and the order for stopping further pursuit was given as soon as no more resistance was made in the Huguenot camp.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROYALIST CAMP.

“ I AM astonished, Sir, that you should presume to interfere,” said the Chevalier d’Evran, speaking to the Intendant of the province, whom he had found on riding down to the post of the second in command, in order to ascertain what was the cause of the attack having been so long delayed in that quarter. “ I am astonished that you should presume to interfere at all. The weak gentlemen who have hitherto been commanding in this country have been indulgent to such insolence: but you will find very different consequences if you attempt to practise it upon me.”

“ Insolence, Sir !—Insolence !” exclaimed the intendant, foaming with rage and mortified pride at being thus addressed in the presence of many hundreds of witnesses. “ Insolence in me ! — Why, who am I, Sir ? Am I not the intendant of justice, police, and finance in this province ?”

“ Yes, Sir, insolence !” replied the Chevalier

d'Evran. "You are the intendant of justice, police, and finance; but before I assumed the command of the King's forces in this province, you yourself had required martial law to be proclaimed, so that you not only put every one else under the authority of the military power, but yourself also; and, by heavens, if you stare in my face in that manner one moment longer, I will have you hanged up to yonder tree. Bring a drum here," he continued, "and summon four officers from the regiments of Lorraine and Berry. We will soon see who is to command here."

The unfortunate intendant turned as pale as ashes; for the gallantry and decision which the Chevalier d'Evran had shown since he assumed the command, were of a very impressive character, and gave weight to his threats. The officer who had laid the complaint against him, however, now interfered. "For God's sake, General," he said, "have mercy upon this poor man, and consider what will be the result of calling a drum-head court-martial."

"I should always be very willing, Sir," replied the Chevalier, drawing up his fine person to its full height, "I should always be very willing to attend to your recommendations; but, Sir,

in the course of this night and the preceding day, I have obtained two great and signal successes over this body of insurgents; and I think that those successes will fully justify me in the eyes of the King, for punishing with such authority as is vested in my hands the person to whom we may attribute that our success was not complete, by the annihilation of the Huguenot party in the province. If the intendant chooses immediately to make a humble apology for what has passed, and to promise in the most solemn manner never to interfere in any one thing in my camp, or under my command, I will so far overlook the matter for the time, as not to carry this extreme measure into execution against him at once. But, in the mean time, I will hold it suspended over his head, and if required, execute it on the moment."

The apologies and promises were as full and ample as the Chevalier could demand; and, leaving strict orders that the worthy intendant should be kept in a sort of honourable surveillance in the camp, the Chevalier turned his horse's head, and rode back with his staff towards the village, smiling slightly over what had just passed, for, to say the truth, he had been acting a part much more harsh and severe than

he was inclined to pursue in reality. The truth is, that after the engagement of the preceding morning, the intendant had shown some disposition to take possession of one or two prisoners that had fallen into the royalists' hands, for the purpose of employing the rack and the wheel in their conversion; but the Chevalier, having determined from the first to put a stop to such measures, had evaded all discussion for the time, very sure that ere long the intendant would give him an opportunity of depriving him, at least for the time, of all authority in the province.

The smile, however, was soon succeeded by a somewhat more anxious expression; for knowing as he did that Clémence de Marly was in the camp of the Huguenots, he was not a little apprehensive of what might have been her fate in the course of the struggle of that night. He had given particular instructions regarding her, however; had made it so fully understood, that he would have no unnecessary bloodshed, and had exhorted his troops and inferior officers so eloquently to regard the Protestants merely as erring brothers, as soon as the arms were out of their hands, that he felt little or no apprehension of any excesses being committed after

the engagement. As soon, then, as he had ascertained that Mademoiselle de Marly was in the farmhouse on the top of the hill, and was perfectly safe, he contented himself with sending a message to her, telling her that he would visit her in the morning, and begging her in the mean time to put her mind completely at ease. He then proceeded to investigate the amount of his own loss, and that of the Huguenots. Nearly an equal number had fallen on each side; but the army of the Chevalier d'Evran could afford to lose a thousand men without any serious diminution of its strength, while the same loss on the part of the Protestant force reduced it in a lamentable degree.

“Now,” thought the Chevalier, when he heard the result of the inquiries that he caused to be made, “if I can but drive Albert of Morseiul to the sea, and force him to embark with the most determined of his sect, while the others lay down their arms and conform, we shall do very well. These battles were necessary to dishearten the desperate fellows, and to give me power to do them good, and treat them mercifully. But we may change our system now, and press them hard without losing the lives of gallant men. What this old Cecil tells me of the

mistake about the liberation, may, if properly shown, mitigate a part of the King's anger towards Albert; but it will never do the whole, and I fear flight is his only resource. This offer that he has made, however, stands desperately in the way, and yet it must be communicated to the King. I dare not conceal it."

While he thus thought, sitting in the room of one of the cottages, information was brought him that one of the wounded Huguenots, who was kept with other prisoners in a barn hard by, was very anxious to see him.

"I will come immediately," he replied to the officer, and then sitting down, he wrote a brief despatch to Louvois, in which he detailed all the events that had occurred; but at the same time, knowing the views of the minister, he intimated that the only means of keeping the extent of the insurrection from the King's knowledge, and from general publicity throughout the whole of Europe, would be to give him the full power of pardoning all men on laying down their arms. He begged the minister to believe that he had not the slightest desire whatsoever that the little services he had performed should be reported to Louis; but at the same time he pointed out that those services could

not be ultimately beneficial, unless the power that he demanded was granted to him, and all other authority in the province superseded for at least one month. He felt very sure that this would be granted by Louvois, as that minister had become greatly alarmed, and had openly expressed to the young commander his anxiety lest the extent of the revolt which had taken place in consequence of measures he had advised, should ruin him for ever with the King. The Chevalier trusted, also — although he was obliged, in the end of his epistle, to state the proposal made by the Count de Morseiul — that the powers granted by the minister would be such as to enable him to serve that nobleman.

When this despatch was concluded, and sent off, he demanded where the person was who had wished to see him, and was led to a small out-house close by the farm in which Clémence abode. The door, which was padlocked, and at which a sentry appeared, was opened to give him admission, and he found stretched upon piles of straw on the floor of the building two or three men, apparently in a dying state, and another seated in a somewhat extraordinary attitude in one corner of the shed. The sight was very horrible; the straw in many parts was

stained with blood, and anguish was legibly written on the pale countenances of the dying.

“Who was the prisoner that wished to speak with me?” said the Chevalier, going in; but they each answered by claiming to be heard: one demanding a little water, one asking to be taken into the open air, and one who, before the words had fully passed his lips, lay a corpse upon the straw, asking pardon and life, and promising obedience and conversion. The Chevalier ordered every thing that could make them comfortable to be supplied as far as possible, adding some sharp reproaches to his own people for the state in which he found the wounded; and he then said, “But there was some one who, as I understood, wished to speak with me more particularly.”

“It was I,” said the man who was sitting down in the corner, at once starting up into the likeness of Jerome Riquet; while at the same moment another faint voice from the farther part of the building said, “It was I, General. I told the officer who came here, that I would fain see you about the Count de Morseiul.”

“Riquet,” said the Chevalier, “I will attend to you presently. You seem well, and unhurt; answer me three questions, and I may say some-

thing that will satisfy you in return. Have you been engaged in this unfortunate business simply as the servant of the Count de Morseiul?"

"As nothing else, upon my word, Sir," replied Riquet.

"Are you a Catholic or a Protestant?"

"As Catholic as salt fish on a Friday," replied Riquet. "Surrounded on all sides by heretics, I was at one time in great fear for myself, like a man in a city where there is a plague. But bless you, Sir, I found it was not catching, and here I am more Catholic than ever."

"Have you, then, in any instance, borne arms in this war?" demanded the Chevalier.

"No, on my honour, Chevalier," replied the valet. "No arms have I borne except a shaving-brush, a razor, a pair of tweezers, and a tooth-pick."

"Well, then," replied the Chevalier, "I can promise you pardon; but remember you are a prisoner on parole. Do you give me your word that you will not try to escape?"

"Lord bless you, Sir," replied the man, "I would not escape for the world. I am with the winning side. You don't suppose Riquet's fool, to go over to the poor devils that you're driving into the sea!"

“Scoundrel!” said a deep but faint voice from the other side of the building; and telling Riquet to bring the light with him, the Chevalier advanced to the spot, where, stretched upon the straw, in the most remote corner of the shed, lay the unfortunate Armand Herval, dying from the effects of at least twenty wounds. As soon as the eyes of the wounded man fell upon Riquet, he exclaimed, angrily,—“Get thee hence, traitor! Let me not see your face, scoundrel! To abandon thus your noble lord at the first moment of misfortune!”

“You mistake, Monsieur,” replied Riquet quietly — “I am not a bit more of a scoundrel than you are, Monsieur Herval, nor, indeed, of a traitor either: every one serves his lord in his own way, Master Herval, that’s all. You in your way, and I in mine. If you had waited a little, to hear what I had to say to the Chevalier, you would have seen that I was quite as ready to make sacrifices for my Lord as yourself.”

“Herval!” said the Chevalier, as he listened to their conversation; “that name is surely familiar to me.”

“Well it might be,” answered Riquet; “for I dare say my Lord must have told you, Monsieur le Chevalier. This man, or I am much

mistaken, would have killed the King himself, if my Lord had not prevented him."

"Indeed!" demanded the Chevalier. "Can we get any proof of this?"

"Proof, Sir?" replied the dying man; "it was on that account I sent for you. The Count de Morseuil is ruined; and the cause of the reformed church is over; and all this evil has happened through my fault. I have heard, too, that he has offered to surrender himself to the axe, in order to buy safety for the rest of us. But surely the King — let him be as great a tyrant as he may — will not murder the man that saved his life."

"The King, Sir, is no tyrant," replied the Chevalier, "but a generous and noble master to those who are obedient and loyal: even to the disobedient he is most merciful; and if this fact could be made known to him, and proved beyond all doubt, I feel perfectly convinced that he would not only pardon the Count de Morseuil for his past errors, but show him some mark of favour, in gratitude for what he has done."

"The King does know it," replied Herval, sharply; "the King must know it; for I have heard that the whole papers of Hatréaumont

fell into the hands of Louvois; and I have myself seen that foul tiger's name written to an order for my arrest as one of Hatréaumont's accomplices."

"But that does not prove," replied the Chevalier, "that either the King or Louvois knew of this act of the Count's."

"It does prove it," replied the dying man; "for the only letter I ever wrote to Hatréaumont in my life was to tell him that I had failed in my purpose of killing the tyrant; that every thing had gone fair till the Count de Morseiul came in between me and him, and declared, that I should take his life first. I told him all, every thing — how I got into the gardens of Versailles at night, and hid under the terrace where the King walked alone — how yon babbling fool betrayed my purpose to the Count, and he came and prevented me doing the deed I ought to have done, even if I had taken his life first. I told him all this, and I cursed the Count of Morseiul in my madness, over again and again — and now the man whose life he saved is seeking to bring him to the block."

"This is extraordinary and important," said the Chevalier: "I cannot believe that the King

knows it. Louvois must have kept it from his ears. Will you make a deposition of this, my good fellow, as early to-morrow as we can get proper witnesses and a notary?"

"Early to-morrow?" said the man faintly, "early to-morrow, Chevalier?—I shall never see a to-morrow. Now is your only moment, and as for witnesses, quick, get paper and pen and ink. There is not half an hour's life in me. If you had come when first I sent, there would have been plenty of time. But now every moment is a loss."

"Quick, Riquet," cried the Chevalier, "bid the officer at the door run to my quarters, and bring down pen and ink and paper, without a moment's delay."

Riquet lost no time, and the Chevalier endeavoured as far as possible to keep Herval quiet till the means of writing were brought. The dying man would go on speaking, however, but with his voice becoming lower and lower, and his ideas evidently in some degree confused. Once or twice he spoke as if he were at Versailles, and in the presence of the King: then seemed as if he fancied himself conversing with Hatréaumont; and then again pronounced the name of Claire more than once, and talked of

happiness. When Riquet and the officer returned, however, with the materials for writing, he had still strength and recollection enough to commence his declaration in a formal manner.

“I, Armand Herval,” he said, “do hereby declare, and on the bed of death affirm most solemnly, that had it not been that the Count de Morseiul prevented me, I would have shot the King of France, upon the terrace at Versailles, after the play, on the night before the arrest of the Chevalier de Rohan, and that all I said was perfectly true, in a letter which was written by me to Monsieur de Hatréaumont, dated on the — I cannot recollect the day:” he added, in a lower tone, “it seems as if a mist had come over that part of my memory.”

“Never mind,” said the Chevalier, “go on, my good friend, go on, the date is unimportant.”

“Was it the twenty-fourth or the twenty-fifth?” continued the man. “I cannot recollect for the life of me, your Majesty. It’s a short life, too. Mine will soon be spent, and Claire’s is all gone —”

He spoke very faintly, indeed; and the Chevalier said, “You forget, my friend, you forget. We were talking of the Count de Morseiul.”

“ Ah ! ” cried the man, with a greater effort, and starting up on the straw—“ Ah, so we were. — What a fool I am ! — Write it down, quick ! — Write it down, quick ! — But take your fingers off my throat ! — Take your fingers off my throat ! — I cannot speak if you stop my breath ! — What’s the use of putting out the light ? — Why do you put out the light ? — Oh, Heaven, it is death, it is death,” and, falling back upon the straw, the strong frame shook for a moment, as if an ague had seized him, and then all was still.

The Chevalier d’Evran shut his teeth close, saying, “ This is unfortunate. However, you are a witness, Riquet, to all that he said.”

“ Lord bless you, noble Sir,” replied the valet, “ nobody will believe a word that I say. I should consider my character ruined for ever if there was any body, in all Europe, that would believe me upon my oath.”

“ I had forgot,” said the Chevalier, dryly ; “ your character is in no danger, I believe, on that score. But my word will be believed, and my voice, at least, shall be heard.”

“ Well, Sir,” replied Riquet, perhaps a little piqued at the Chevalier’s reply, “ let me add my voice too ; for though they may believe me

in nothing else, they may, perhaps, believe me in a confession which will go to twist my own neck. I wish to be sent to the King, Sir; though if you can find out when he is in a good humour I should prefer it. But my object is to inform him that it was altogether my fault, and my foolishness, and my crime, that prevented the Count de Morseiul from going to Versailles as soon as he was liberated from the Bastille to throw himself at the King's feet. If it had not been for that aforesaid foolishness of mine he would never have come hither, would never have led the rebels at all, and most likely, by this time, would have been as high in the King's good graces as ever."

"I have heard all this before," said the Chevalier. "But are you positively resolved, my good friend, to go voluntarily and make confession of all these things?—Do you remember the consequences?—Do you think of the risks?"

"No, Sir," replied Riquet, "I do quite the contrary. I try to forget them all as fast as possible, being resolved to go at any rate, and, therefore, judging that the less I think about risks and consequences the better."

"By Heaven, thou art right," replied the Chevalier, "and thou shalt have a bottle of

Burgundy, if there be one in the camp, to keep warm thy good philosophy. See, there is the grey of the morning coming in, and I may well go away satisfied with having found one man in the world who is not so great a scoundrel as I thought him."

The Chevalier returned to the hut in which he had established his quarters, and cast himself down for an hour's repose; but before the daylight had been long in the sky he was on foot again, and at the door of the farm-house which contained Clémence de Marly. He was immediately admitted; and, strange as it may seem, if the Count de Morseiul had witnessed that meeting, it would certainly have wrung his heart more than the loss of a great battle. The royalist commander advanced at once to his fair prisoner, and, putting his arms slightly round her, kissed her cheek without any apparent reluctance on her part; and her first exclamation was, "Oh, Louis, I am glad to see you safe! You know not how my heart is torn!"

"I dare say it is, my pretty Clémence," replied the Chevalier, in his usual light tone; "but you, who have been doing nothing else but tearing other people's hearts for the last five years, must take your turn now. You have

placed me in a terrible predicament, however, thoughtless girl," he added. "You are obstinate as an Arragonese mule about this matter of religion, and will not be contented till you have got yourself roasted in this world as preparatory to ——"

"But tell me, Louis — tell me about him!" demanded Clémence. "Is he safe? Has he escaped from this awful night?"

"I suppose you mean Morseiul, by *he* and *him*," said the Chevalier, "and if so, he is safe, as far as I know. He has escaped. That is to say, he has not been taken, thank God — though one time he was very near it; for, by the flash of the guns, I saw his face in the middle of our men: — but I dare say now, Clémence, that you would a thousand-fold rather have me killed than this heretic of yours?"

"Do not be unkind, Louis," replied Clémence—"I would of course rather have neither of you killed; but now that you have got me, tell me what is to be my fate?"

"Why, that question is difficult to answer," said the Chevalier; "Heaven knows, I did not want you, Madam. I was obliged to write you a formal summons to return, for mere decency's sake; but I certainly never expected you would

obey it. You might have said, No, silly girl, without telling all the world that you had turned Huguenot — all for the love of a gallant knight.”

“Nonsense, Louis! Do speak seriously,” replied Clémence: “you very well know I was what you call a Huguenot long before.”

“Not quite, Clémence! not quite!” cried the Chevalier: “you were what may be called Huguenoting. But this rash and imprudent determination of declaring your feelings, doubts, or whatever they may be, at the very moment when the sword of persecution is drawn, was, indeed, very silly, Clémence. What is to be done now is rendered doubly difficult, and I suppose I must of course connive at your escape. We must take means to have an intimation conveyed for some trading vessels to hover about the coast, to give you an opportunity of getting away till this fierce bigotry has gone by. It will not last long; and in a year or two, I doubt not, exiles will be permitted to return. The only difficulty will be to have the ships opportunely; but I think I can manage that.”

“Oh, do, do, Louis!” exclaimed Clémence, eagerly. “That is all that can be desired; and pray try to persuade Albert to fly at once.”

“Nay, nay,” replied the Chevalier, laughing, “that must not be my task, Clémence. On that subject I dare not say a word. But you may well do what you will. I will take care that the means of flight to another country shall be provided for you, and you may take with you any one that is willing to go.”

“But then,” exclaimed Clémence, “I must have the opportunity of persuading him.”

“Certainly,” exclaimed the Chevalier: “the first thing you have to do is to get out of my camp as fast as you can. I would not have you three days here for the world; for as affairs go at present, I cannot answer that the power of protecting you will be left to me for three days. However,” he added, after a moment’s thought, “to-day you must stay and march on with us, and before to-morrow, I trust I shall be able to put you under such protection as will insure you safety and support in your flight; and now, pretty maid, I must leave you. We shall begin to march about noon. In the mean time there is a courier going to Montaigu, so send off thither for whatever you may need to make you comfortable. An easy horse shall be ready for you; and if at any time you may feel yourself inclined to gallop away, you may take him

with you as a present from me. By the way, little heretic," he added, when he got to the door, "you will want money for your peregrinations."

"Oh, no," replied Clémence, "I have plenty. I have plenty, I assure you. I have near two hundred double louis which I took to the prison in hopes ——."

"Little do you know of what you may want, silly girl," replied the Chevalier. "Why one of these very merchant ships may demand the half of that for carrying you over. Here," he added, drawing forth a leathern purse embroidered in gold — "I don't know how much there is here, but you must take it too; and if by any unforeseen circumstance you should need more when in England, draw on me what they call a bill of exchange."

Clémence took the money without ceremony, as if it were a mere matter of course, and only added, "Come and see me again before we march, Louis."

The Chevalier nodded his head and left her.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST EFFORTS.

To describe the military manœuvres which took place during the three or four following days would be neither amusing nor instructive to the reader. Suffice it to say, that the small force of the Count de Morseiul diminished as he retreated, while the army of the Chevalier d'Evrant was increased by the arrival of two new regiments. The latter had thus an opportunity of extending his line, and frustrating a vigorous effort made by the Count to cut his way into Brittany. Every effort that the Protestant leader made to bring to his aid those who had promised very soon to join him, only showed him that the estimation which he had formed of the degree of vigour and unanimity to be expected from the Huguenots was but too accurate. Almost all those determined and daring leaders of the lower orders who had given energy and activity to all the movements of the insurgents had fallen in the preceding skirmishes. Herval

was heard of no more; Paul Virlay had been seen by one of the soldiers to fall by a shot through the head towards the close of the last affair; and at length, with not more than five hundred men under his command, Albert of Morseiul found himself shut in between a force of eight thousand men and the sea. The only consolation that he had was to hear that Clémence de Marly was safe, and the only hope was that some vessels from Rochelle, for which he had despatched a shallop in haste, might be tempted by the large sum he offered to hasten round and carry off a certain portion of his troops, comprising the principal leaders, while the rest laid down their arms, and he himself surrendered to the fate that awaited him.

Such were his plans and purposes when the last day of the insurrection dawned upon the world; and we must pause for an instant to describe the situation of his little force on that eventful morning.

There is upon that coast a small rocky island, not so high as the celebrated Mont St. Michel, which is on the opposite side of the peninsula of Brittany, but in almost every other respect similar to that famous rock. At the time we speak of this island was fortified, and the guns

of the castle commanded almost entirely the small bay in which it was situated. At low water the island becomes a peninsula, being joined to the land like the Mont St. Michel by a narrow neck of land, along the top of which there ran a paved causeway, covered entirely by the sea to the depth of five or six feet at the time of high water. The commandant of the fort was a Protestant gentleman who had distinguished himself in some degree in the service. He had been raised, and greatly favoured by the influence of the Counts of Morseiul, and owed his post to them. He had not only promised to co-operate with the young Count in the commencement of the unfortunate revolt, but he had sent him some assistance, and a large quantity of ammunition; and when the Count found that he was cut off from forcing his way into Brittany on the one hand, or reaching Saintonge on the other, he had shaped his course past Montaigu towards the little bay in which this island was situated, and had succeeded in reaching it, notwithstanding the efforts of the royalist corps to prevent him.

Opposite to the island was a small village, on a high bank above the sea-shore. It possessed a large church, and two or three walled farm

houses; and during one half of the night after his arrival, the Count toiled with the country people, who were principally Protestants, to throw up breastworks and plant pallisades, so as to fortify the village in as strong a manner as possible. Four cannon, which were all that he possessed, were planted to command the principal road leading to the village, and ere morning the whole was brought to such a condition as to enable the little band of Protestants to offer a determined and lengthened resistance, should they be driven to do so.

Was it then, it may be asked, the purpose of the Count to offer that resistance? It certainly was not; but feeling perfectly sure that the Chevalier d'Evran was disposed to grant the Protestants the most lenient terms consistent with his duty, he took these measures in order to give him the best excuse for treating with the insurgents, and granting them a favourable capitulation. "If," he thought, "the Chevalier can show to the King that it would have cost him two or three thousand of his best troops to overcome or slaughter a poor body of five hundred men, Louis is too wise and too good a soldier himself not to hold him perfectly justified for granting the mildest terms."

When all was completed, the Count cast himself down to rest, and slept for some time from utter exhaustion. By the first ray of morning, however, he was upon the shore, looking towards the sea, and beheld, to his no small joy and satisfaction, three vessels, at the distance of about four or five miles, standing of and on, as if waiting for the tide to enter the bay. The tide, however, though not quite at the ebb, had sunk so low that there was no chance of their being able to come in till it had quite gone down and risen again; and Albert of Morseiul looked with anxiety for the passing of six or seven hours, which must thus elapse.

His anxiety now led him to the other side of the village, and going to one of the farm houses, situated at the corner of a small cart-road which he had barricaded, he went up to a window on the first floor, and looked over the wide view that sloped away below. There appeared, what he had expected to find, the camp of the Chevalier d'Evran, hemming him in on all sides. The distance between the village and the first tents was about two miles, so that at any time, without more than half an hour's notice, the attack upon his little fortress might commence. He was quite prepared, it is true, and doubted not

to be able to maintain his post for many hours, knowing that his men would fight with the energy of despair.

But no movement whatsoever in the royalist camp indicated any great haste to attack him. There were no groups of officers busily reconnoitring; there were no regiments drawn up as if to march to the assault; and the only objects that were seen were two files of soldiers marching along to relieve the guard at different points of the camp. All this was satisfactory to an experienced eye like that of the Count de Morseiul, and well knowing his opponent, he judged that the Chevalier was waiting for some reply from Paris, ere he gave any answer to the terms which he, the Count, had suggested.

He paused, therefore, for nearly twenty minutes, gazing over the scene, when suddenly, from a point of the camp where nothing seemed stirring before, a little group of persons on horseback drew out, and rode swiftly towards the village. The moment after the Count perceived that two of those persons were clad in women's garments; and the rapidity with which they came, showed him that they were fearful of being stopped. Going down from the window in haste, he sprang upon horseback, and with the attend-

ants who were waiting for him below, rode out upon the side of the hill, in order to assist the fugitives in case of need ; but no sign of pursuit took place till one half of the distance or more had been passed by the little party ; and the Count dismounting about a quarter of a mile from the village, watched their coming with eager eyes and a beating heart, as he recognised the form of Clémence de Marly. When she was beyond all risk of being overtaken, a small party of cavaliers issued forth from another part of the camp, and rode on towards the village, but slowly, and they were still at more than a mile's distance when Clémence was in the arms of her lover, and weeping upon his bosom. He led her in as fast as possible, followed by the maid Maria, and no less a person than Jerome Riquet, who seemed to have found of breaking his word so strong a temptation, that he could not resist it.

A rumour had spread amongst the Protestants in the town that something of interest was proceeding without, and when the Count and Clémence turned towards the village, they found that their meeting had been witnessed by many eyes. But in the faces of those they passed, Albert of Morseiul read courage brightened, and

resolution strengthened, by that which they had just seen; and there was not a man within that little encampment whose heart did not feel elevated and confirmed by witnessing the bursting forth of those tender and ennobling feelings, which ever, when pure and true, dignify man's spirit, and brighten his mind.

When they were within the barriers, the Count turned for a moment to look at the other group which had drawn out from the camp; but it did not seem that they were in pursuit of Clémence, for they shaped their course along the road towards the principal entrance of the village, and when the Count turned, he clearly saw them displaying a flag of truce. He led Clémence into the house where he had taken up his head quarters, however, and saying a few soothing words, left her to see what was the intelligence which the Chevalier's envoys conveyed. As he walked down he met a messenger coming to demand his presence at the barrier; and on approaching it, he found waiting, in the guard-house, the old English officer, Sir Thomas Cecil, with one or two French gentlemen with whom he was slightly acquainted.

"Monsieur de Morseiul," said the old Englishman, "I have been charged by Major-

General the Chevalier d'Evran to communicate to you the only terms which he is permitted by the King to grant under the circumstances in which you respectively stand. He was long in hopes that those terms would have been more favourable than they are, and they are very painful to me to announce. But as you conveyed to him a message through me, he thought that I ought to undertake to bear the reply."

"I thank you, my dear Sir," replied the Count, "most sincerely for undertaking the task. But, as a preliminary, let me tell you before these gentlemen who have come with you, as well as before Monsieur du Bar here, and my own friends around me, that the only terms which I will accept are those which I notified to the Chevalier d'Evran through you, namely, permission for any one hundred of my friends of the reformed religion to retire from France unmolested; a free pardon to all the rest, except myself, on laying down their arms, and a promise that they shall be permitted to exercise their religion in private without annoyance. On these conditions we will immediately lay down our arms, and I will surrender myself at discretion to his Majesty's pleasure."

“No, no! — No, no!” cried several voices amongst the Protestants; “we cannot submit to that. We will die at our post with arms in our hands, rather than that the Count shall be sacrificed.”

“My good friends,” replied the Count, “that is a personal matter altogether. I have made the best terms that I can for you, and I have done what I judge right for myself; knowing that the only way of dealing with his Majesty is to throw myself upon his magnanimity.”

The old Englishman wiped away a tear from his eye. “I am sorry to say, Sir,” he rejoined, “that I cannot even mention such favourable terms as those. On condition of your immediately laying down your arms, the Chevalier d’Evran, in the name of the King, offers the following : — Permission for every one not absolutely a subject of France to leave the country unmolested. Free pardon to all but the actual leaders of the revolt, specified in the following list. They must unconditionally surrender to the King’s pleasure, and trust to his mercy.”

The list apparently contained about fifty names; at the head of which stood that of the Count of Morseiul. The Count looked round upon the Protestant gentlemen by whom he

was surrounded. On all their countenances but one or two there was awe, but not fear. As the only reply needful, the Marquis du Bar laid his finger upon the hilt of his sword, and the Count turning to Sir Thomas Cecil, said, "You perceive, Sir, that it is utterly impossible we can accede to this demand. I know not whether it has been made under any mistaken impression; but when I offered what I did offer through you to the Chevalier d'Evran, I was just as certain that we should be reduced to the situation in which we are at present as I am now — nay, expected it to be worse than it is. We can but die, Sir; and I have not the slightest objection to lead you round the preparations which I have made for resisting to the last; so that if our blood must be shed, and the Chevalier is determined to sacrifice the lives of a large body of our royal master's troops, he may be satisfied that he cannot carry this position without the loss of two or three thousand men."

"It is not necessary, Count. It is not necessary," replied the old officer. "The Chevalier has no choice; the terms are dictated by higher authority; and all that he can do farther than signify those terms to you is to grant

you five hours to consider of them. If you like to accept a truce for that time you may take it."

The Count was not a little surprised at this indulgence, but he took care to express none; and accepting the truce willingly, suffered the old officer to depart. One or two of the young French officers, whom he had known in the army, wrung his hand as they went away, and besought him, with kindly feelings, to think well of what he was about. One of them, however, ere he went, whispered a more important word in his ear.

"There are ships out at sea," he said. "You and the other leaders may get off before the five hours are out."

The Count took no notice, but wished him Good-by; and returning with Monsieur du Bar and the rest of the officers, he held a brief consultation with them in the saloon of the little inn.

"Had we more boats," he said, "the matter would be easily managed. But there are but two on the shore, which will not carry out above twenty of us. However, my good friends, it becomes necessary to take some prompt resolution. I have begun to be somewhat doubtful

to-day of Le Luc, who commands in the fort. He has sent me no answer to my note of last night, and though I do not believe that he would be so great a scoundrel, after all his promises, as to turn against us, yet I must ascertain decidedly what are his intentions; for he might sink the boats as they passed under his guns. If he be still friendly to us, and willing really to aid us, we are safe, for while the soldiery lay down their arms and surrender upon promise of free pardon, you, gentlemen, who all of you, I find, are upon this long list of proscription, can march along the causeway into the fort, and embark in the ships that lie out there. If, on the contrary, we find him a traitor, we must make the boats hold as many as they will, and take the chance of the scoundrel firing upon them. I shall only claim to have one place reserved in one of the boats."

"Two," said du Bar; "surely two, Morseiul. Did I not see a lady?"

"It is for her I speak," replied the Count. "Du Bar, in pity do not urge me in matters where my resolution is taken. I have pangs and agony at my heart sufficient at this moment, believe me, to be spared that of refusing a friend.—Now then, gentlemen," he added, after

a moment's pause, "let five of you accompany me along the causeway which must be passable by this time, to speak to Governor Le Luc. If you will mount your horses, I will be down with you in an instant," and he went up to take one hurried embrace of her he loved, and to explain to her what had happened, and what was proposed, concealing from her, as far as he could, the dangers and difficulties of their situation; but concealing from her still more carefully his own purpose of surrendering at discretion.

When this was done he went down, and finding the other gentlemen ready, sprang upon his horse, without noticing that a multitude of the inferior Protestants had gathered round, and seemed to be watching them with somewhat suspicious eyes.

The sea had not quite left the causeway dry, except in one or two places, and the sands were still quite covered. But the only result of this was to force the Count and his train to proceed slowly, and one by one, while he himself led the way, the white stone pavement being clearly discernible through the thin water.

In the mean time, however, the Protestants who had been gazing at him as he mounted, gathered into knots together, and seemed to be

speaking hastily and discontentedly. Some of the inferior officers joined them, and a great deal of tumult and talking ensued, which called out several of the gentlemen of the party to remonstrate. But remonstrance seemed in vain, and the crowd soon after trooped away out of the little open space where they had assembled, in the direction of the corps de garde, where the small battery of cannon was placed. Various broken sentences, however, were heard from time to time, such as, "I would hardly have believed it. To take care of themselves, and leave us to perish. I always said, we should be made the sacrifice. Better be a Catholic and at peace, than that."

"Ride after the Count and tell him what is going on," said one of the gentlemen to another, "while I go to our good minister, Monsieur Vigni, and get him to reason with them. You see they are mistaking the matter altogether, and think that we are going to abandon them. Make haste, or it will be too late."

The suggestion was instantly followed; but ere the officer could get his horse and ride down to the sea shore, the Count and his party were nearly at the fort, and to them we must now turn.

The progress of the young general of the Huguenots had been slower than it might have been, not only on account of the causeway being partially covered with water, but also because the stone, with which it was composed, had in some places been broken up or carried away. He at length reached, however, the fortified head of the causeway at the foot of the rock, and then demanded admission to speak with the governor.

This was refused him; but as such might naturally be the case, his suspicions were but little increased by that event. He, however, directed the officer in command immediately to send up and inform the governor Le Luc of his being there, and of his desire to speak with him.

After keeping him some time, the officer returned, saying, "that Monsieur le Luc would come down himself to speak with the Count," and during the period that the Protestant leaders were thus occupied in waiting for the appearance of the governor, the Protestant officer arrived from the village, bringing news that the soldiery which had been left behind were in a state of actual mutiny, having entirely mistaken the object of the Count and his companions, and imagined that they were engaged

in seeking their own safety, leaving the soldiers to meet whatever fate might befall them."

"In the name of Heaven, ride back, Du Bar," said the Count, "and quiet them till I return. It is better for me to stay and speak to this worthy gentleman, who seems to be showing us a cold face, as you know he owes every thing to my house. I will return instantly, as soon as he condescends to favour us with his presence."

Du Bar did not reply, but turned his horse, for they were still kept on the outside even of the causeway head, and rode back as fast as he could go, accompanied by one of the other officers.

The Count remained, growing more and more impatient every moment; and the governor, perhaps thinking that he would get tired of waiting, and retire without an answer, kept him nearly half an hour before he made his appearance. He then came down with that dull and dogged look, which generally accompanies the purpose of disgraceful actions; and the Count, restraining his indignation, called to him to cause the drawbridge to be lowered, in order that he might speak to him more privately.

"No, indeed," replied the governor, with a scoff; "with the little force I have in here, I

shall not think of causing the drawbridge to be lowered, when I know that the village is occupied by a large party of armed traitors."

"Traitors!" exclaimed the Count; but again overcoming his anger, he added, in a cooler tone, "Monsieur le Luc, up to this moment I have believed you to be of the reformed church."

"I am so no longer," muttered the governor.

"Well, Sir," continued the Count, "there are other things which may have influence upon men of honour and good feeling besides their religion. There is at the village, as you say, a large party of Protestant gentlemen, assembled in defence of their liberty and freedom of conscience: they find themselves unable to resist the power of those that would oppress them; terms are proposed for extending a free pardon to all but some thirty or forty; those thirty or forty are desirous of obtaining shelter in this fortress for one or two hours at the utmost, till they can embark in those ships, which are waiting for the rising of the tide. Now, Monsieur le Luc, my father gave you the first commission that you held under the crown. He obtained for you your first promotion, and I

bestowed upon you the post in this fortress which you now hold. Will you, Sir, grant us the shelter that we demand at your hand?"

"Very pretty," replied Le Luc, "to talk of honour, and ask me to betray the trust that the King reposes in me."

Still the Count kept his temper. "You refuse, then?" he demanded.

"Yes, that I do," answered the governor in a rude tone; "and the sooner you take yourself back to the land the better, for I am in no humour to be trifled with."

It was with difficulty that the Count restrained himself; but there was one chance more, and he tried it.

"Yet another word, my good friend," he said. "There is a matter in which you can favour us without endangering your own safety, or getting into discredit with the government, If we attempt to pass to the ships in what boats we can find, will you pledge me your word that you do not fire into them?"

"If you do not make haste away from the gates of this fortress," replied the governor, who saw, by the quivering of the Count's lip, the contempt that he could not help feeling, "I will fire upon you where you are, and will sink

the boat of every traitor that comes within shot."

"Sir," said the Count, "you are a dastardly, pitiful, contemptible scoundrel. It is only happy for you that the drawbridge is between us, or I would treat you like an ill-conditioned hound, and lash you within an inch of your life under my horse's feet."

"You shall hear more, traitor; you shall hear more in a minute," replied the governor. "And mind I tell you, the faster you go the better for you."

Thus saying, he turned away, and mounted the zigzag staircase in the rock with a rapid step. The Count paused, and turned his horse; but at that very moment he saw a party of horsemen at the other end of the causeway apparently coming towards him with great speed, part of them upon the sands, which by this time had been left dry, part of them following the road in the midst.

"It is Du Bar and the rest," said he, in a low voice, to one of the gentlemen near him. "I have a very great mind to stay here, and try to punish that fellow for his insolence. I could swim that little bit of sea in a moment, and the drawbridge once in our possession, the castle would be ours."

“Count, Count,” shouted the officer of the guard from the fortress-side of the drawbridge, “for God’s sake make haste and ride back. I hear that governor of ours giving orders for charging the cannon with grape. He will fire upon you as sure as I am alive, for he sent word to the Chevalier d’Evrans last night that he would do so.”

“I thank you, Sir, for your courtesy,” replied the Count calmly. “Under these circumstances, my friends, it is better for us to go back.”

The other officers put their horses into a quick pace, and they rode on; but they had scarcely gone a hundred yards when the cannon of the castle opened a fire of grape upon them. The shot, however, flew over their heads, as they were too near the walls to be easily hit, except from the drawbridge, where the Count could see preparations being made for following up the same course. At the same moment, however, he pulled up his horse, exclaiming, “Good God, that is not the Marquis du Bar; it is the Chevalier d’Evrans!”

The officers who were with him paused also, and to their surprise, and somewhat to their consternation, perceived that, shut in as they

were by the sea on two sides, and by the fortress on another, the only open ground before them was occupied by the Commander-in-chief of the royalist forces, with a numerous staff, and a small escort of cavalry.

“We have nothing for it, my friends,” said the Count de Morseiul in a low, calm tone, “but to surrender ; it is evident our men have capitulated in the village. Let us ride on and meet them.”

Thus saying he spurred on his horse, while the Chevalier d’Evran galloped forward on his side, waving his hat, and shaking his clenched fist towards the people on the walls of the fort. They either did not recognise him, however, or did not choose to obey his commands ; and before he and the Count de Morseiul met, a second discharge of grape-shot took place from the cannon of the castle. At the same moment the Count de Morseiul beheld the Chevalier d’Evran suddenly check up his horse, press his hand upon his side, and fall headlong to the ground, while one of the horses of the Count’s party was killed upon the spot, and an officer of the Chevalier’s staff fell wounded, but rose up again immediately.

The Count galloped eagerly on to the spot

where he had seen the Chevalier d'Evran fall, and the memory of long friendship came painfully back upon his heart. Before he had reached the group of soldiers and officers, however, five or six men had raised the unfortunate commander from the ground, and were bearing him rapidly back towards the village. So eagerly were those who remained conversing together, and so fully occupied with their own thoughts, that the Count de Morseiul might, to all appearance, have passed by them without opposition or inquiry ; but he himself drew in his rein, demanding, "Is he much hurt?"

"Alas ! Monsieur de Morseiul," replied the officer, who seemed to be next in command, "he is dead ! Killed on the spot by that infernal shot ! and a nobler gentleman, or better soldier, never lived. But some of your own people are killed also ; are they not ?"

"One of the horses only, I believe," replied the Count. "Pray, may I ask how all this has happened ? — Poor Louis !"

"Ride on, ride on, Charliot," said the officer, speaking to one of his own men before he answered the Count, "that scoundrel will fire upon us again. Tell him I will hang him over

the drawbridge if he fires another shot. Monsieur de Morseiul, I will explain all this as we ride back, for you will have but little time to make your arrangements. Scarcely half an hour ago as Monsieur d'Evran and the rest of us were reconnoitring pretty close to your camp, a party of your men came out and offered to capitulate on certain terms, which the Chevalier instantly agreed to, and they gave us possession of the gate and the corps de garde. Just at that moment, however, came up Monsieur du Bar, who remonstrated somewhat angrily with the Chevalier on signing a capitulation with the men, when he had given the officers a truce of five hours to consider of his terms. He represented that in those five hours all the gentlemen named in the proscribed list might have made their escape. On that the Chevalier replied, that he intended to take no advantage; that the truce should be held to exist notwithstanding the capitulation; and that every gentleman on that list might act exactly as he pleased, without any one trying to impede him. He could not suffer them, of course, to pass through our camp; but if they could escape by sea they might. He said, however, that he wished to speak with this Le Luc, and

that he would take the liberty of riding down through the village. Du Bar then asked if he intended to bid Le Luc fire on the boats or ships. He answered quite the contrary; that his only intention was to supersede him in his command, and put an officer in his place who would keep the truce to the letter. You have, therefore, yet four hours nearly, to do what you will in, Monsieur de Morseiul; for I, of course, taking the Chevalier's command, shall maintain all his arrangements, and act in their full spirit."

The Count had listened sadly and attentively, and when the royalist officer had done speaking, he replied that by his leave he would ride on as fast as possible to the village, and consult with his companions.

"Do so! do so!" answered the other; "and now I think of it, I had better go on to the fort, and put the Chevelivr's intentions in execution. For this firing upon you may be considered already a breach of the truce. I shall find you on my return; and at the little auberge you will meet with an English gentleman most anxious to speak with you." Thus saying, he turned again towards the fort, and the Count, with a sad heart, rode back to the village.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BITTER PARTING.

JUST at the entrance of the village, the Count met with his companion Du Bar.

“Have you heard all?” demanded that officer. “What is to be done?”

“Get the boats ready with all speed,” replied the Count. “The tide will turn within half an hour, the ships will be able to come farther in. Twenty or thirty persons may get off in the first boats, which must come back again for a second freight. I see clearly, my friend, that there is no intention of dealing harshly with us. All the officers wish us to escape, and there will be no more firing from the castle. I must leave the embarkation, and all that, to you, Du Bar, for I have things to go through that will try my heart to the utmost. I must have a few minutes to make up my mind to parting with my friends and companions, and all that I love on earth, for ever. — Du Bar,” he continued, while the other wrung his hand affectionately, “there will be a young lady

who will accompany you, and that girl, the daughter of poor Virlay. You have a wife and children yourself, whom you love, I know, fondly and devotedly. They are in safety, you told me, on those opposite shores which I shall never see. But let me beseech you, — by the memory of these dark and terrible days, when the hand that now presses yours is laid in the dust, as I know too well must soon be the case, — let me beseech you, I say, to give every aid and assistance to those two that I now commit to your charge. Be to the one as a brother, Du Bar, and to the other as a father. I know you to be honest and true as you are brave and wise; and I shall lay my head upon the block with more peace at my heart, if you promise me that which I now ask.”

“ I do, I do,” replied the Marquis, with the tears standing in his eyes. “ I do promise you, from my heart, and I would fain persuade you even now to consider —— ”

But the Count waved his hand and rode on.

There was a considerable crowd round the entrance of the little inn, and he had some difficulty in making his way in. At the door of the room where he had fixed his own quarters, he found two or three of the royalist soldiers; but,

passing by them, he entered the room, when a sight met his eye which might well chill and wring his heart.

The room was nearly empty, but stretched upon the long table, which occupied the midst, was the fine noble form of the Chevalier d'Evran, now still in death. Standing near the head of the body, was the old English officer, Sir Thomas Cecil, with an air of deep stern grief upon his fine and striking countenance. His hat was off, showing his white hair, his arms were crossed upon his chest, his head was erect as ever, and nothing like a tear was in his eye: but there was no mistaking the expression of his countenance. It was that of intense sorrow. But on the other side of the table grief was displaying itself in a different manner, and in a different form. For there knelt Clémence de Marly, with her beautiful head bent down over the dead body; her hair, fallen from its bindings, scattered wildly, partly over her own shoulders, partly over the breast of the Chevalier; her left hand clasping that of the dead man, her eyes and face buried on his bosom, while the convulsing sobs that shook her whole frame, told how bitterly she was weeping.

The Count paused with a look of deep sadness; but there was no anger or jealousy in his countenance. The old English officer, however, as soon as he perceived him, hurried forward, and took both his hands, saying, in a low and solemn voice, "You must let her weep, Count, you must let her weep! It is her brother!"

"I have been sure of it for several days," replied the Count. "She told me not, but I knew it from what she did tell me. This day of agony, however, Sir, is not yet over. I must disturb her grief but to waken her to more. You know the short time that is allowed for flight. You know the fate that would await her here if she were to remain in this country as what is called a relapsed heretic, by the cruel persecutors of this land. Within two hours from this time, my good Sir, she must take her departure for ever. The boats will be ready, and not a moment must be lost; and in those two short hours she must part with one who loves her as well as ever woman yet was loved, with one who truly believes she loves him as well as woman's heart can love — and who shall say where is the boundary of that boundless

affection? She must part with him, Sir, for ever, and with her native land."

"This is not her native land," replied the old officer. "The lady Clémence Cecil, Sir, is an English woman. But in one respect you say true. My poor niece must go, for I have experienced in my own person, as you know, how daring is the injustice of arbitrary power in this land, in the prisons of which, I, an English subject, have been detained for more than a year and a half, till our own papistical and despotic King chose to apply to your despot for my liberation, and for the restoration of my brother's children. She must leave this land indeed. But your words imply that you must stay behind. Tell me, tell me, my noble friend, is this absolutely necessary, in honour and in conscience?"

The Count grasped his hand, and pointed to the dead body. "I promised him," he said, "who lies there, that I would surrender myself to the King's pleasure. I have every reason to believe, that, in consideration of that promise, he dealt as favourably with us as he was permitted; that he even went beyond the strict line of his duty to give us some facilities of escape; and I must hold my

promise to the dead as well as if he were here to claim it."

"God forbid," said Sir Thomas Cecil, "that I should say one word against it, terrible as is your determination — for you must well know the fate that awaits you. It seems to me that there was only that one act wanting, to make you all that our poor Clémence ought to love on earth, at the very moment she is to lose you for ever. See, she is raising her head. Speak to her, my friend, speak to her!"

The Count advanced and threw his arms round her. He knew that the grief which she felt was one that words could do nothing to mitigate, and the only consolation that he offered was thus by pressing her fondly to his heart, as if to express that there was love and tenderness yet left for her on earth. Clémence rose and wiped away her tears, for she felt he might think that some doubt of his affection mingled with her grief for her brother, if she suffered it to fall into excess.

"Oh, Albert," she said, "this is very terrible. I have but you now ——"

A hesitation came over the Count de Morseuil as she spoke those words, gazing tenderly and confidingly upon him: a hesitation, as to

whether he should at once tell her his determination, or not let her know that he was about to remain behind, till she was absolutely in the boat destined to bear her away. It was a terrible question that he thus put to his own heart. But he thought it would be cruel not to tell her, however dreadful might be the struggle to witness and to share.

“Alas, Clémence,” he replied, “I must soon trust you, for a time at least, to other guidance, to other protection than my own. The boats are preparing to carry off a certain number of our friends to England. You must go in one of them, Clémence, and that immediately. Your noble uncle here, for such I understand he is, Sir Thomas Cecil, will protect you I know, and be a father to you. The Marquis du Bar, too, one of the noblest of men, will be to you, as a brother.”

Clémence replied not, but gazed with a look of deep, earnest, imploring inquiry in the countenance of her lover, and after a moment he answered that look by adding, “I have given my promise, Clémence, to remain behind!”

“To death, to death!” cried Clémence, casting herself upon his bosom, and weeping

bitterly, "you are remaining to die. I know it. I know it, and I will never quit you!"

The Count kissed her tenderly, and pressed her to his heart; but he suffered not his resolution to be shaken. "Listen to me, my Clémence," he said. "What may be my fate I know not: but I trust in God's mercy, and in my own uprightness of intentions. But think, Clémence, only think, dear Clémence, how terrible would be my feelings, how tenfold deep and agonising would be all that I may have to suffer, if I knew that, not only I myself was in danger, but that you also were in still greater peril. If I knew that you were in imprisonment, that the having followed the dictates of your conscience was imputed to you as a crime; that you were to be tormented by the agony of trial, before a tyrannical tribunal, and doomed to torture, to cruel death, or to eternal imprisonment. Conceive, Clémence, conceive how my heart would be wrung under such circumstances. Conceive how to every pang that I may otherwise suffer would be added the infinite weight of grief, and indignation, and suspense on your account. Conceive all this, and then, oh Clémence, be merciful, be kind, and give me the blessing of seeing you depart in safety, as a

consolation and a support under all that I may have myself to suffer."

Clémence wept bitterly upon his bosom, and the Count soothed her by every endearing and tender word. At length, she suddenly raised her head, as if some new idea had struck her, and she exclaimed, "I will go, Albert. I will go upon one condition, without torturing you more by opposition."

"What is that condition, dear Clémence?" demanded the Count, gazing on her face, which was glowing warmly even through her tears. "What is that condition, dearest Clémence?"

Clémence hid her face again upon his breast, and answered, "It is, that I may become your wife before I quit this shore. We have Protestant ministers here; the ceremony can be easily performed. My uncle, I know, will offer no opposition; and I would fain bear the name of one so noble and so beloved, to another land, and to the grave, which may, perhaps, soon reunite us."

The Count's heart was wrung, but he replied, "Oh, beloved Clémence, why, why propose that which must not — which cannot be; why propose that which, though so tempting to every feeling of my heart, would cover me with well-

deserved shame if I yielded to it? — Think, think Clémence, what would deservedly be said of me if I were to consent — if I were to allow you to become my wife; to part with you at the altar, and perhaps by my death as a condemned criminal, to leave you an unprotected widow within a few days.”

Clémence clasped her hands, vehemently exclaiming, “ So help me Heaven as I would rather be the widow of Albert of Morseiul, than the wife of any other man that ever lived on earth ! ”

Sir Thomas Cecil, however, interposed. “ Clémence,” he said, “ your lover is right: but he will not use arguments to persuade you that I may use. This is a severe and bitter trial. The Almighty only knows how it will terminate: but, my dear child, remember that this is no ordinary man you love. Let his character be complete to the last ! Do not — do not, by any solicitation of your’s, Clémence, take the least brightness from his bright example. Let him go on, my child, to do what he believes his duty at all risks, and through all sacrifices. Let there not be one selfish spot from the beginning to the end for man to point at; and the Almighty will protect and reward him to whom he has

given power to act uprightly to the last; — if not in this world, in another he will be blest, Clémence, and to that other we must turn our hopes of happiness, for here it is God's will that we should have tribulation."

Clémence clasped her hands, and bent down her eyes to the ground. For several minutes she remained as if in deep thought, and then said, in a low but a firmer voice, "Albert, I yield; and knowing from what is in my own heart, how dreadful this moment must be to you, I will not render it more dreadful by asking you any thing more that you must refuse. I will endeavour to be as calm as I can, Albert; — but weep I must. Perhaps," she added, with a faint, faint smile upon her lips, "I might weep less if there were no hope; if it were all despair: but I see a glimmering for exertion on my part, if not exactly for hope; and that exertion may certainly be better made in another land than if I were to remain here: — and now for the pain of departure. That must be undergone, and I am ready to undergo it rather at once than when I have forgotten my faint resolution. Do you go with me?" she continued, turning to her uncle; "if it be needful that you stay, I fear not to go alone."

Sir Thomas Cecil, however, replied that he was ready to accompany her. Her maid, Maria, was warned to prepare with all speed; and ere a few more sentences were spoken on either part, the Marquis du Bar came to inform the Count, that the boats were afloat, and the vessels standing in, as far as they could into the bay. The Huguenot gentlemen mentioned in the list of proscription were already on the shore, and not a little eager to be in the first boats to put off. The soldiery were drawn up under arms to await the expiration of the truce; and as the Count and Sir Thomas Cecil led down Clémence, weeping bitterly, to the sands, a murmur of sympathy and compassion ran through the crowd, and through the ranks of the soldiery, and the gentlemen drew back to give her the first place in the boats. Before they reached the edge, however, the Count, whose eye had been raised for a moment to the vessels, pointed towards them with a smile of satisfaction.

“Gentlemen,” he said, looking round, “I am happy to see that you will all be able to get off without risk. Do you not perceive they are sending off their boats for you? Clemence,” he said, in a lower voice, “will you go at once, or will you wait till the other boats arrive, and all go together?”

“ Let me wait — let me wait,” said Clémence, in the same low tone. “ Every moment that my hand touches yours is a treasure.”

The other boats came in rapidly with the returning tide ; and as soon as their keels touched the sand, and a few words had been spoken to ascertain that all was right and understood, the Count turned and said, —

“ Now, gentlemen.”

There were some twenty or thirty yards of shallow water between the sands and the boats, and Albert of Morseiul raised Clémence in his arms, and carried her to the edge of the first. Neither of them spoke a word ; but as leaning over, he placed her in the boat, she felt his arms clasp more tightly round her, and his lips were pressed upon hers.

“ The Almighty bless thee !” and “ God protect and deliver you !” was all that was said on either side ; and the Count turned back to the shore.

One by one the different officers advanced to him in silence, and grasped his hand before they proceeded to the boats. When they were all in, and the boats began to push off, the Count pulled off his hat, and stood bare-headed, looking up to Heaven. But at that

moment a loud shout burst from the soldiery, of "The Count, the Count, they have forgotten the Count!"

But the Count of Morseiul turned round towards them, and said aloud, in his usual calm, firm tone: "They have not forgotten me, my friends. It was you that were mistaken when you thought that I had forgotten you. I remain to meet my fate, whatever it may be."

A number of men in the ranks instantly threw down their muskets, and rushing forward, clasped his knees, beseeching him to go. But he waved his hand, saying gently, "It is in vain, my friends! My determination has been taken for many days. Go back to your ranks, my good fellows, go back to your ranks! I will but see the boats safe, and then join you, to surrender the village and lay down our arms."

The Count then turned again to the sea, and watched the four boats row onward from the shore. They reached the vessels in safety in a few minutes; in a few minutes more the boats belonging to the village began to row back empty. After a little pause some more canvass was seen displayed upon the yards of the vessels. They began to move; they sailed out of the harbour; and, after gazing down upon

the sand fixedly and intently while one might count a hundred, the Count of Morseiul, feeling himself solitary, turned, gave the word of command, and marched the men back into the village. He entered immediately into the room where the Chevalier d'Evran lay, and although by this time all the principal officers of the royalist force were there, with several other persons, amongst whom was his own servant Riquet, he walked silently up to the head of the corpse, and gazed for several minutes on the dead man's face. Then lifting the cold hand, he pressed it affectionately in his.

"God receive thee, Louis! God receive thee!" he said, and his eyes filled with the first tears that they had shed that day.

"I see no use now, Sir," he continued, turning to the officer who had taken the command of the royal forces, "I see no use of delaying any longer the surrender of the village. I am ready in person to give it up to you this moment, and also to surrender my sword. The only favour I have to ask is, that you will make it known to his Majesty that I had no share in the event by which my unhappy friend here fell. The shot which slew him was intended for me, as you are doubtless aware."

“ Perfectly,” replied the commander ; “ and I have already sent off a despatch to the King, giving him an account of the events of this morning ; and I myself, joined with all the officers here present, have not failed to testify our sense of the noble, upright, and disinterested conduct of the Count of Morseiul. I would fain speak with him a word alone, however,” and he drew him aside to the window. “ Count,” he said, “ I shall not demand your sword, nor in any way affect your liberty, if you will promise to go to Paris immediately, and surrender yourself there. If you would take my advice, you would go at once to the King, and cast yourself at his feet. Ask for no audience, but seek admission to him at some public moment. If fortune favours you, which I trust it will, you may have an opportunity of explaining to his Majesty many things that have probably been misrepresented.”

“ I shall certainly follow your advice,” said the Count, “ since you put it in my power to do so.”

“ Ah, gentlemen,” cried Riquet, who had been listening unperceived to all they said. “ If the poor Chevalier had lived, the Count would have been quite safe, for he had the

means of proving that the Count saved the King's life not long ago, of which his Majesty knows nothing. I heard the man Herval make his confession to the Chevalier with my own ears; but he could not take it down, for the man died before pen and ink could do their work."

"That is unfortunate, indeed," said the commander; "but still you can give your testimony of the facts, my good friend."

"Bless you, Sir," replied Riquet, "they will never believe any thing I can say."

"I fear not, indeed," replied the Count. "Besides, Sir, my good friend Riquet, if he went to Paris, would have so much to confess on his own account, that they would not mind what he said in regard to the confessions of others."

"Unfortunately, too," said the commander, "all the papers of Hatréaumont, if I remember right, were ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. Such was the sentence of the court, I know, and it must have been executed long ago. However, Count, the plan that I have proposed is still the best. Speed to Paris with what haste you may; cast yourself upon the King's mercy; tell him all and every thing, if he will

permit you to do so, and engage all your friends to support your cause at the same moment. Take your way at once into Brittany," he added, dropping his voice, "and from thence to Paris; for I very much fear that the result would be fatal if you were to fall into the hands of the intendant of Poitou. He is exasperated to the highest degree. You have surrendered at discretion, taken with arms in your hand. He has already broken on the wheel two or three under the same circumstances; and I dare not deal with him in the same way that the Chevalier d'Evran did, for I have not sufficient power."

The Count thanked him for his advice, and followed it; and, as we must not pause upon such circumstances as the surrender of the village, we shall let that event be supposed to have taken place; and in our next chapter shall, if possible, pursue this sad history to its conclusion.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END.

It was in the great reception room at Versailles, an hour after the King had held the council, which failed not to meet every day. His mood was neither more nor less severe than ordinary; for if, on the one hand, events had taken place which had given him pleasure, other events had reached his ears from the south of France, which showed him, notwithstanding all Louvois's efforts to conceal the extent of the evil, that serious disturbances in the Cevennes, and other parts of France, near the mouth of the Rhone, were likely to follow the measures which had been adopted against the Protestants.

Louvois himself was present, and in no very placable mood, the King having replied to him more than once during the morning haughtily and angrily, and repressed the insolence by which his demeanour was sometimes characterised, with that severe dignity which

the minister was very willing to see exercised towards any one but himself.

Louis, who was dressed in the most sumptuous manner, held in his hand a roll of papers, which had been given him just before his entrance into the chamber; but he did not read them, and merely turned them round and round from time to time, as if he were handling a truncheon. Many eyes were fixed upon him, and various were the hopes and fears which the aspect of that one man created in the breasts of those who surrounded him. All, however, were silent at that moment, for an event was about to take place highly flattering to the pride of the ostentatious King of France, and the eyes of all were fixed upon the doors at the end of the hall.

At length they opened, and a fine looking middle-aged man, dressed in a robe of red velvet, followed by four others in black velvet, was led into the apartment and approached the King. He bowed low and reverently, and then addressed the French sovereign without embarrassment, and with apparent ease, assuring the monarch in vague, but still flattering terms, that the republic of Genoa, of which he was Doge, had entertained nothing, throughout

the course of events lately passed, but profound respect for the crown of France.

Somewhat to the left of the King, amongst the multitude of French princes and officers, appeared one or two groups, consisting of the ambassadors from different barbaric nations; and, while the Doge of Genoa spoke, offering excuses for the conduct of the state he ruled, the eye of Louis glanced from time to time to the Indian envoys in their gorgeous apparel, as they eagerly asked questions of their interpreter, and were told that it was the prince of an independent state come to humble himself before the mighty monarch that he had offended.

When the audience of the Doge of Genoa was over, and he withdrew, a multitude of the courtiers followed, so that the audience hall was nearly clear, and the King paused for a moment, talking over the Doge's demeanour to those who surrounded him, and apparently about to retire immediately. He had taken a step forward, indeed, to do so, when the Prince de Marsillac, who certainly dared to press the King upon disagreeable subjects, when no one else would run the risk, advanced, and, bowing low, pointed to the papers in the King's hand.

"I ventured, Sire," he said, "before your Majesty came here, to present to you those papers which you promised to look at."

The King's brow instantly darkened. "I see at once, Prince," he said, "that they refer to the Count of Morseiul, a rebel, as I am informed, taken with arms in his hand, in regard to whom the laws of the land must have their course."

The Prince was somewhat abashed, and hesitated; but another gentleman stepped forward with stern and somewhat harsh features, but with a noble air and look that bespoke fearless sincerity.

"What is it, Montausier?" said the King, sharply addressing that celebrated nobleman, who is supposed to have been represented by Molière under the character of the misanthrope.

"Merely to say, Sire," replied the Duke in a firm, strong tone of voice, "that some one has falsified the truth to your Majesty. My nephew, in command of the troops to whom the Count surrendered, informs me that he was not taken with arms in his hand, as you have said; but, on the contrary, (and here lies a great difference,) surrendered voluntarily, when, according to the truce of five hours granted to the Hu-

guenots by the Chevalier d'Evran, he had every opportunity of escaping to England had he so pleased, as all the rest of the leaders on that occasion did."

"How is this, Sir?" demanded the King, turning to Louvois. "I speak from your statements, and I hope you have not made me speak falsely."

"Sire," replied Louvois, with a look of effrontery, "I have just heard that what the Duke says is the case; but I judged that all such points could naturally be investigated at the Count's trial."

The King seemed struck with this observation; but Montausier instantly replied — "Monsieur de Louvois, if his Majesty will permit me to tell you so, you have been, for the first time in your life, sadly tardy in receiving information; for my nephew informs me that he gave you intelligence of this fact no less than three days ago; and, in the next place, you are very well aware of what you have not thought fit to say, that by investigating such things at a trial, you would directly frustrate the express object for which the Count de Morseuil surrendered himself when he might have escaped, which was to cast himself at the King's feet, and explain to

him the strange and extraordinary misconception by which he was cast into rebellion, and to prove that as soon as ever he discovered the mistake which had been committed, he had expressed himself ready to surrender, and trust to the King's clemency, which is as great a quality as his justice."

Louvois's face had grown fiery red. "Expressed his readiness to surrender!" cried he with a scoff. "Did he not fight two battles after that?"

"How, Sir?" exclaimed the King. "I had understood from you that no battles had been fought at all. Mere skirmishes you said — affairs of posts — that the insurrection was nothing but the revolt of a few peasants."

Louvois stammered forth some excuse about the numbers being insignificant, and the whole business crushed within nine days after the Chevalier d'Evran took the command; but the King turned away angrily, saying, "Monsieur de Louvois, no more interruption. I find in my middle age, as I found in my youth, that a king must see with his own eyes. Now, Marsillac, what is it you wish? What is it you desire of me, Montausier?"

"For my part, Sire," replied the Prince de

Marsillac, "I only desire that your Majesty should run your eyes over those papers. They are very brief, and to the point; and every fact that is therein stated I can assure you can be proved on indisputable authority."

"And I," said the Duke of Montausier, "have only to beg that your Majesty would see and hear the Count of Morseiul. From him, as every man here present knows, you will hear the pure and simple truth, which is a thing that happens to your Majesty perhaps once in five or six years, and will do you good."

The King smiled, and turned his eyes upon the papers; and when he had read them nearly through, he smiled again, even more gaily than before.

"It turns out, gentlemen," he said, "that an affair has happened to me which I fancy happens to us all more than once in our lives. I have been completely cheated by a valet. I remember giving the villain the paper well, out of which it seems he manufactured a free pardon for his master. At all events, this frees the Count from the charge of base ingratitude which has been heavily urged against him. Your statement of his willing surrender, Montausier, greatly diminishes his actual and undoubted

crime; and as I have complied with the request of the Prince de Marsillac, and looked at the papers, I must not refuse you yours. Either to-day, if the Count have arrived, or to-morrow, I will hear his story from his own lips."

"Sire," replied the Duke of Montausier, "I have been daring enough to receive him in my apartments."

The cloud came slightly again over Louis's countenance; but though he replied with dignified gravity, yet it was not with anger. "You have done wrong," he said; "but since it is so, call him to my presence. All you ladies and gentlemen around shall judge if I deal harshly with him."

There was a pretty girl standing not far from the King, and close between her own mother and the interpreter of the ambassadors from Siam. We have spoken of her before, under the name of Annette de Marville; and while she had remained in that spot, her eyes had more than once involuntarily filled with tears. She was timid and retiring in her nature; and as the Duke of Montausier turned away to obey the King, every one was surprised to hear her voice raised sufficiently loud to reach even the ear of Louis himself, saying to the interpreter, "Tell

them that they are now going to see how magnanimously the King will pardon one who has offended him."

"The King looked another way; but it was evident to those who were accustomed to watch his countenance, that he connected the words he had just heard with the humiliation he had inflicted on the Doge of Genoa, and that the contrast struck and pleased him not a little.

In a very short time, before this impression had at all faded away, the door again opened, and the Duke of Montausier re-entered with the Count of Morseiul. The latter was pale, but perfectly firm and composed. He did not wear his sword, but he carried it sheathed in his hand, and advancing directly towards Louis, he bent one knee before the King, at the same time laying down the weapon at the monarch's feet.

"Sire," he said, without rising, "I have brought you a sword, which for more than ten years was drawn in every campaign in your Majesty's service. It has, unfortunately, been drawn against you; and that it has been so, and at the very moment when your Majesty had a right to expect gratitude at my hands, is the

bitterest recollection of my life; so bitter indeed, so horrible, so painful, that the moment I discovered the terrible error into which I had been hurried, the moment that I discovered that I owed my liberation to your Majesty, I instantly determined, whatever might be the result of the events that were then taking place, to surrender myself, unconditionally, to your Majesty's pleasure, to embrace no means of escape, to reject every opportunity of flight; and if your indignation so far overcame your mercy as to doom me to death, to submit to it, not alone with courage, which every man in your Majesty's service possesses, but with perfect resignation to your royal will."

The words, the manner, the action, all pleased the King, and the countenance with which he looked upon the young nobleman was by no means severe.

"You have, I fear, greatly erred, Monsieur de Morseiul," he replied. "But still I believe you have been much misled. Is there any favour that you have to ask me?"

The Count gazed up in the King's face, still kneeling; and every head was bent forward, every ear listened eagerly. A momentary pause followed, as if there was a great struggle within

him ; and then he answered, “ Sire, I will not ask my life of your Majesty ; — not from any false pride, for I feel and acknowledge that it is yours to give or to take, — but because my conduct, however much it might originate in mistake, must appear so ungrateful to you that you cannot, at this moment, feel I deserve your mercy. The only favour I will ask, then, is this : that should I be brought to a trial, which must end, as I know, inevitably in my fall, you will read every word of my deposition, and I therein promise to give your Majesty a full and true account, without the falsification of a single word, of all that has taken place in this last lamentable business.”

Louvois took a half step forward as if to speak, and not a little anxiety was upon his countenance. But, contrary to the general impression of those present, all that the Count had said had pleased the King ; though his latter words had not a little alarmed the minister, who knew that truths might be displayed which he was most anxious to conceal.

“ Monsieur de Morseuil,” replied the King, “ I will promise what you ask, at all events. But what you have said has pleased me, for it shows that you understand my spirit towards

my subjects, and that I can grant without being asked. Your life, Sir, is given to you. What punishment we shall inflict may, perhaps, depend upon the sentence of a judicial court or of our council."

"May it please your Majesty," said Louvois, stepping forward, "to hear me one moment. You have, perhaps, thought me inimical to Monsieur de Morseiul, but such, indeed, is not the case; and I would propose, that instead of subjecting him to any trial at all, you, at once, pronounce sentence of banishment upon him, which is all the mercy that he can expect. His estates, as ought to be the case, must be forfeited to the crown."

"And he driven forth," said the King, "to employ his military talents in the service of our enemies."

"Never, never, never, Sire!" exclaimed the Count, clasping his hands eagerly. "Never should my sword be drawn against my native land. I would rather beg my bread in misery, from door to door: I would rather live in want, and die in sorrow, than do so base an act!"

There was truth and zeal upon his countenance, and Louvois urged what he had proposed;

but while he was addressing the Monarch, in a lower tone, one of the side doors of the hall opened, and a lady came partly in, speaking to some one behind her, as if she knew not that any one was in the hall. The moment that she perceived her mistake, Madame de Maintenon drew back; but the King advanced a step and besought her to come in.

“We want your presence much, Madam,” he said with a smile, “for we cannot decide upon what is to be done with this young culprit. But you seem in haste, and who is this with you? I have somewhere seen his face before.”

The King might well fail to recognise the countenance of Jerome Riquet, for it was at that moment actually cadaverous in appearance, from the various emotions that were going on in his heart.

“I was at that moment seeking your Majesty,” said Madame de Maintenon, advancing with her usual calm grace, “and was passing this way to your cabinet, to crave an audience ere you went out. But I thought the ceremony of the day was over.”

“What are your commands, Madam?” said

the King. "Your wishes are to be attended to at all times."

"You know, Sir," she said, "that I am not fond of ever asking one, who is only over generous to his servants, for any thing. But I was eager at that moment to beseech your Majesty to grant at once your pardon to this unfortunate man who some time ago committed a great crime in misapplying your Majesty's handwriting, and who has now just committed another, for which I understand the officers of justice are in pursuit of him, though the swiftness of the horse which brought him here has enabled him to escape for the moment. He found out my apartments, I know not how, and I brought him instantly to your Majesty as soon as I had heard his story, and read this paper."

"What is this paper?" demanded the King, taking it; "ticketed I see in the hand of Monsieur de la Reynie, 'Letter from the said Herval to the Sieur de Hatréaumont!' How come you possessed of this, sirrah?"

Riquet advanced and knelt before the King, while Louvois suddenly seemed to recollect some business, and retired from the circle. "Sire," said the valet, in the briefest possible

terms, "in serving my master I was taken by your Majesty's forces, shut up in a barn with some wounded prisoners, heard the well known leader, Herval, confess to the Chevalier d'Evrans, that he had written a letter to the traitor Hatréaumont, regarding his having been prevented from murdering your Majesty by the Count de Morseiul, (in which prevention I had some little share). The man died before his words could be taken down. The Chevalier d'Evrans said it did not signify, for you would believe his evidence. But the Chevalier d'Evrans was killed. My word I knew would not be believed; but I heard that the papers of Hatréaumont were to be burnt this day by the common hangman, opposite the Bastille.* I had a swift horse saddled. I got close to the fire. I fixed my eyes upon the papers one by one as they were thrown in, till seeing the writing of Herval, I seized the letter, and galloped hither as hard as I could. This is my tale, Sire, and on my word it is true."

The King hastily opened the paper, and read the contents, the expression of his countenance changing several times as he proceeded.

* The papers of Hatréaumont were preserved for some time after his death, in order to give light in regard to the guilt of his accomplices.

But when he had done, he turned towards the Count, saying, "Monsieur de Morseiul, I require no one now to advise me how to act towards you. You are freely and entirely pardoned. I have given up the hope again of ever seeing you cast away the errors of your faith. But even that must not make me harsh towards the man who has saved my life. I would only fain know how it was that you did not inform me of this at the time?"

"Sire," replied the Count, "I came to your Majesty for the purpose. Your Majesty must remember, that I told you that I had matters of deep importance to communicate. You referred me to Monsieur de Louvois, and as I was proceeding to his house, I was arrested. In the Bastille I was allowed to communicate with no one, and the rest you know."

"We have been all very unfortunate, Count," replied the King. "However, I trust, that these embarrassments are at an end. You have your free pardon for the past, and now for the future. I cannot violate in your favour the laws that I have laid down for the regulation of the land, and for the establishment of one general religion throughout the country. If you stay in France, you, with others, lose the means of ex-

ercising the ceremonies of your sect. But, as I said to the Count de Schomberg, I say to you : in consideration of the great services that you have rendered, I will allow you to sell all your possessions if you choose to retire to another land, and this is, I fear, all I can do."

"Your Majesty overwhelms me with bounty," said the Count, "but there are yet two favours that I would ask."

"What more?" said the King.

"One request is, Sire," said the Count, "to be allowed once in every year to present myself before your Majesty; and the other, that I may retain the château and the immediate grounds around it belonging to my ancestors. Thus every fond recollection that I have attached to France will still be gratified; and though in exile, I shall live a Frenchman to the last."

"Your request is granted," replied the King, with a smile. "And now, gentlemen and ladies, as by your faces round I judge you are all well satisfied, we will not detain you longer."

Thus saying, Louis turned and withdrew.

Ere the Count of Morseiul retired from the room, and before any of his friends therein could speak with him, Madame de Maintenon said a word in his ear in a low voice.

“Go to the hotel of the British ambassador,” she said. “You will there find those that you do not expect.”

The heart of the Count of Morseiul beat high. He had words of gratitude to speak to many there present; but as soon as that was done, he hurried to Paris without a moment's pause; and in a few minutes clasped Clémence de Marly to a joyful heart.

We need not tell here the brief story she related of her flight from the coast of France to London; and of her having found an affectionate parent in one who, by the wiles of an artful second wife, and an intriguing priest, had been persuaded to leave his children, by a first marriage with a Protestant lady, to the charge of her Catholic relations in France; and to the care of the King of that country. Louis had become the godfather of the eldest (known to us as the Chevalier d'Evrans), while the earl himself was in exile during the troubles of the great rebellion. A Catholic himself, the Earl had been easily induced to believe that his children's salvation depended upon their being educated in a Catholic country; even though concealed there from Protestant relations by assumed

names. But on the death of his second wife, all his feelings of natural affection returned, and during an illness, which made him believe that he was on his death-bed, he sent his brother to seek and bring back his children. We need not enter into the detail any farther. The reader can and will imagine it all. All that remains to be said is, that Clémence, in her eagerness, had easily persuaded that parent, whose only child she now was — for the three which had sprung from the second marriage had not survived — to hasten over to Paris, invested with every authority from the King, with whom his religion rendered him a favourite, to solicit the pardon of the Count of Morseiul. In consequence of the considerable round the Count was obliged to take in his journey to the capital, and the difficulty of obtaining an audience of the King, she had arrived the day before his fate was finally decided.

The only part of that fate which could yet be doubtful, was now in her hands ; and, if the King of France had shown himself merciful to the Count de Morseiul, she showed herself devoted to him through life, making him as happy, as the combination of the rarest qualities

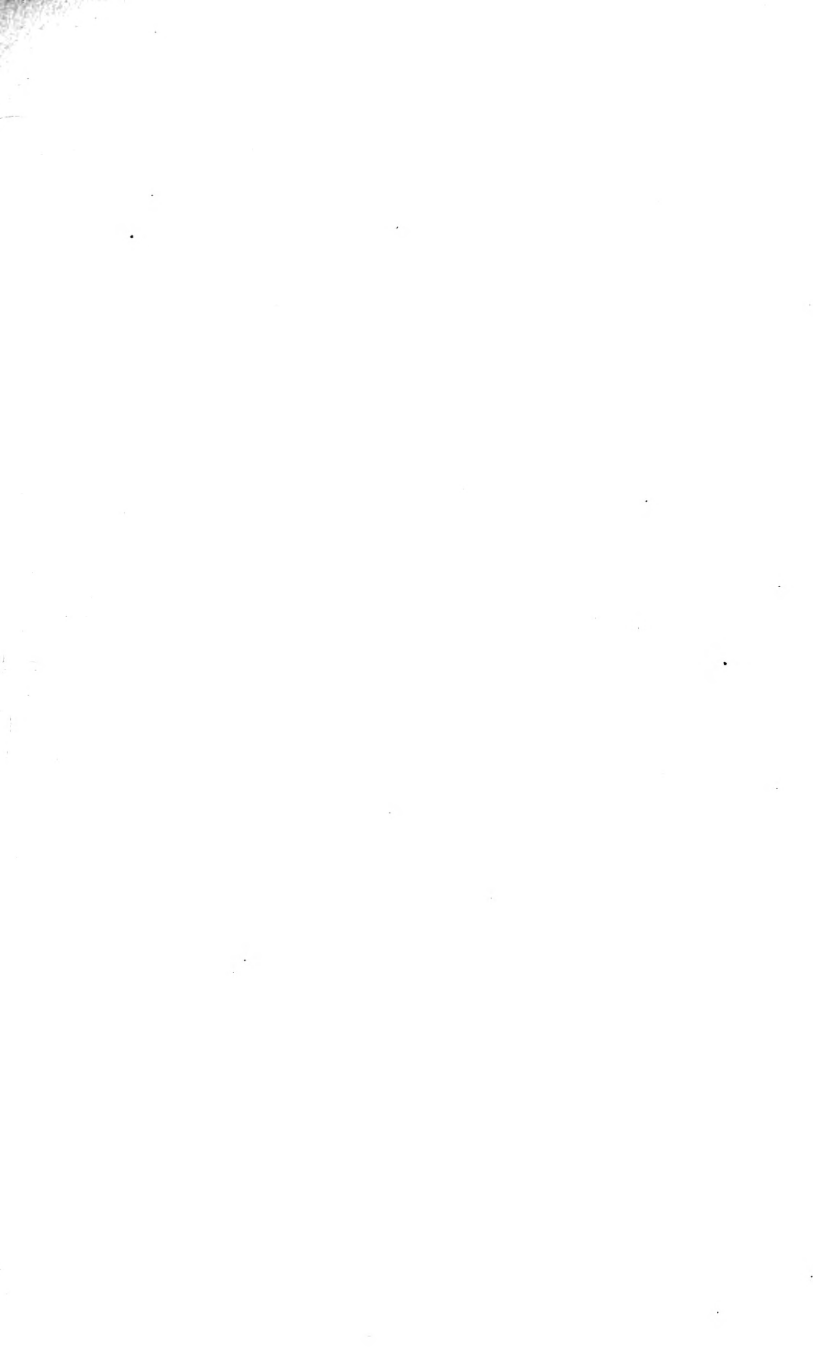
of mind and person with the noblest, and the deepest, and the dearest qualities of the heart, could make such a man as we have endeavoured to depict the Huguenot.

THE END.

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